

Metis Ironworkers 2

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Interviewers: Winston Gereluk & Muriel Stanley-Venne Videographer: Don Bouzek
Interviewees [in order of appearance]: Larry Avery, Hugh Edgar, Tom Daniels, Homer Doucet,
Dennis Redhorse Kopp, Ivan [Kelly] Beaugard, Hugh Kopp

LA: My name is Larry Avery. I moved down from Fort McMurray and I'm now living out past Stony Plain, a retired ironworker. The first original CN Tower was built in 1905 and the second one they added onto the CN Tower in 1935. Then they tore that down in 1963 and demolished it to nothing, then built the CN Tower that's now sitting there. Ashman Construction did the contracting and Abugov & Sutherland were the architects on it. The building site is still where it is today and it's now owned by Tawa International. It was owned in between that by another company but now it's owned by Tawa International.

Q: Could you describe that building in structural terms?

LA: The CN Tower was built in 1964, 364 feet or 26 storeys high. It was 280,297 square feet of office space, opened in February 14th, 1966. The cost at that time was \$10.5 million, and that today would cost \$77 million. It was the tallest building from 1966 to 1971 in Western Canada. July 18th, 2009, the wind struck the front part of it and knocked the sign down. The only thing that was sitting up on the sign was "N To" from CN Tower; that's all that was left. We had a 110 mile an hour km winds and knocked the sign down and did quite a bit of damage at that time in 2009.

Q: Can you talk to Winston when you're telling the story?

LA: Okay. That's about it up to date.

Q: Could you tell us the story of the tower sign again?

LA: The CN Tower: out in the front of it there was a sign up and down and then there's the patio floor. What happened is the sign fell. The wind blew the sign down and smashed a few cars and stuff like that. It wrecked quite a bit of stuff around the area in 2009. No one was hurt but it did a lot of damage.

Q: What goes into building such a structure?

LA: There was lots of rebar in it, which we did: 3,000 tons of rebar. We worked at it pretty hard day and night, 12-hour shifts day and night. The boys at night would do the cad welding, which was columns added up together all the way up to the top of the tower. Then, in the daytime, the boys would come in and do the slabs, each floor. We were doing a floor every second day; I think it was every second day that we were doing a floor.

Man: Every second week probably.

LA: Second week? Ya, okay sorry. Every second week we were doing a floor. It was lots of work, lots of rebar on every floor. It was hard work, and dangerous really. We were sliding around on slippery floors. The floor was all greased with diesel fuel in order so the concrete wouldn't stick to it, and they had to put that down before they put the rebar on it because you can't get no oil on the rebar. The rebar has to adhere to the concrete.

Man: Is it okay if I can add in?

Q: We'll get to you in just a second.

LA: Then we'd be walking around with our boots on the slippery floor and it was kind of dangerous because two guys were carrying the rebar and putting it down and the pan slab. The pan slab is really more or less like a waffle, the same thing. It has dips in it and then the top was just square pans like so: 24 inches wide roughly. Then there's a down set and there'd be two bars on the bottom of that. I think they were #11s or something like that, but they were, I'd say, an inch and a half diameter and they're 60 feet long; 40 feet long, sorry. We'd have to put them in the valleys and then there was another slab on the top of that. That was 15 or 20 ml on top of that.

Q: Give us your name and talk a bit about that accident you were talking about earlier.

HE: My name is Hugh Edgar. I'm from Edmonton and I started working on the CN Tower in 1964. Talking about some of the incidents, the carpenters would get the floors ready for us to put the concrete in, but we were in such a hurry to get started they never had the guard railing up yet. We'd be putting the perimeter beam in and two guys would be packing these bars that weighed 350 pounds. And they were heavy, I'll tell you. I was 160 pounds then or less. You're looking down over the edge and the people looked like ants down there. We were packing in on a plank, and it's a long ways down. We just couldn't wait for them to get that guard railing in. It was hurry, hurry, hurry. Then, when we were first starting the building, we were on the third floor and one of the foremen was working up on the wall 57 feet up and he fell. He ended up going right down through an elevator shaft and it ripped him all apart and it killed him. He was just a mess. He was quite the guy. He was a big guy. I'm a little bit lost here now what to talk about.

Q: Was there an investigation?

HE: The Compensation Board did one but there was never anything that I know of that happened. Back then the safety wasn't--like he was hanging on the wall with a piece of rebar, which would never even be thought about. Nowadays you'd be hanging on a rope when he fell and he would've never got hurt. But back then it was just very dangerous the way things were done, no safety equipment. One of the twins I was working with, Paul, and there were stories what happened there. People don't really know what happened. It was said that he couldn't keep up with Paul tying; so he was cheating. He wasn't tying every one, he was tying every

second or third. So that's probably why maybe it didn't hold and that's why he fell. Is there anything else?

Q: The CN Tower never really belonged to the CN.

LA: The CN was bought by CN Tower and they built it on the same site. But then they had a cutback in their company. So AGT and a few of those moved in there. Pretty soon the tall building right across from there, Macdonald Hotel, that was built and then AGT moved into it. So then they kept renting it out, renting it out, until finally CN moved their people over closer to the yard and they started renting it out. They sold it twice. . . . Now it's owned by Tawa.

Q: Talk further about the health and safety aspect.

HE: There really wasn't any to speak of. I don't know what to say. If you fell and died, well it wasn't safe. But they just kept doing the same thing – they still kept working with rebar hooks. But eventually it did change.

Q: You didn't wear harnesses?

HE: No, that never came in until just lately.

Q: Tell me about some of the workers. How were ironworkers recruited and trained?

HE: If you had a strong back and a weak mind, that was the only qualifications.

Q: Tell me about some of the people you saw coming on the job.

LA: There was mostly friends to start with, families. There was the Rivards, there was the Robas, and we were kind of friends of theirs and they kind of got Hughie and myself on. Then Tom Daniels; there was a few Daniels on there. The Hughie Kopp was on there. It was all just kind of through friends and stuff like that; we kind of hung around together a little bit and we all ended up working there. We worked pretty hard I think for young guys like we were. I think I was 20 when I started there and after that I went out to the bridge up in Fort McMurray and did a bridge up in Fort McMurray.

Q: So the hiring procedure wasn't very formal?

HE: No. I got hired at a party.

Q: Describe how that happened.

HE: Well we had a party and they all worked together on the CN. I asked about if I could get on and they said sure, and I come to work. I wasn't very old. I was only 16 or 17. I went and they just kind of laughed. They didn't think I'd be able to do it. But I did it. Then I went on and started

my own business a few years later in 1974. At one time I had up to 50 guys working. I did a big job for Dominion Bridge, ALCB liquor store, and that was 3,000 tons. I had a lot of people working then. It was low work, just on floors and that; I wasn't up high on that.

Q: And the hiring was done in much the same way?

HE: You were supposed to be hired through the union hall. But if the union hall couldn't supply men, then you could hire wherever. That's how that happened. Back then it was part union and part not. But I did join the union back then and we worked through the union. As for the safety, there wasn't; it was just basically common sense. There was no regulations about wall hooks or what you wore. When Paul got killed there it was just really silly when you look back on it. It was just a piece of rebar stuck in your belt and then you hooked it on the wall that you were hanging on. It wouldn't take much if he went ahead and back. That thing could've flipped off. Usually it snaps on and it can't come unhooked nowadays. But, back then, it was pretty crude.

Q: Give us your name and introduce yourself.

TD: I'm Tom Daniels. I'm retired. I've worked with Ashman, I've worked with McCurdy Steel, I've spent years with Dominion Bridge, and in my later years live in ?, Alberta. Now I'm a bum.

Q: What would you like to pick up on from what was said earlier?

TD: The safety aspect of the job – that's something in the course of years I've always looked at. We didn't have the luxury of steel-toed boots, safety belts, nothing, not even snap-on hooks. We made our own. You come to the job. You got a hook? No. Here's a piece of rebar; make one. That was the whole thing. I think the reason, in my estimation, is get the job done. That was the whole attitude – get it done. When we were doing the pilasters around the end of the building, like Hughie related to earlier, there was no guardrail. There was no walkways on there -- you had to use your own plank, and sometimes you had to move your plank ahead to the next one. They were not nailed down. We were in too much of a hurry to get it done. We didn't wait for the carpenters to come up and make it nice for us. We'd probably get lost if it had been safe for us. We wouldn't know what the hell to do. That's what the whole safety was all about. The speed of the job, the speed of the work: it was go. I think every one of us on the site were running around 110 percent all the time – just go, go, go. That was the nature of what we were doing.

Q: Give some detail.

TD: Along the forms there was always 4 x 4s projecting off the side of the building. So we'd have to put walkways on and guardrails. But we didn't do that. We were in a hurry. We'd just take an 8 foot piece of 2 x 6 or 2 x 8, throw it on there, finish your job, slide it over. Ends were not even nailed down, because we had to get it done. I think the whole aspect of working fast was the deadline, and we had to meet that deadline. There's a completion date. A lot of these buildings, even in structural steel, each floor is already rented out before it even starts. If a contractor

doesn't meet the deadline, he's gotta pay back a lot of rent money. So this is where we had to come in and do it fast and be on time by the due date. A lot of times it got completed before the due date. The rest of it I think was pride, pride that you'd know you could work that fast. Everybody who saw you working fast would know you're a hard worker. So, if there was any down time, there were other offers coming from all over because of how hard we worked and how much we accomplished. I don't think they realized how much beer we drank either. You work hard and fast during the day; so you'd go have a beer that evening. When you look at that devil may care attitude, myself I think that kind of existed in everybody right from the start. Caution to the wind, because you got paid for doing this. This whole lifestyle, I'd say the majority was a devil may care attitude. You're there to do a job; you do it.

Q: But you start with fear, don't you?

TD: You have to have fear. If you don't have fear and respect for a building, you're going to get hurt. You have to respect where you're at; you have to have a touch a fear; you have to respect what you're doing. If you lose that respect, you're gonna fall from any height you're at.

Q: Talk about new people coming on the job and you witnessed as far as them getting over their initial fear.

TD: We'd give them a hard time. That's how we broke people in – you give them a hard time, test them out, always on their case. Then they're the ones doing the same thing to other people coming in. You adapt to the group you're working with; you work the same way. Eventually in eight or nine months or a year's time they're the ones that's giving somebody else a hard time that's just come on the job, because this is how it's supposed to be done. That's where the whole learning process what we were doing – you learn on site. I got on because I come down and my brother Vic was running a crane for Ashman. When he was up on the crane, I walked in there and they said, you wanna do this? I said, ya. Come tomorrow. That was it. That was the hiring process. No resume, not even a belt. McCurdy supplied the belt.

Man: What about your brother?

TD: Vic? He come down from the crane and worked with us because he liked it better.

Man: What about Billy?

TD: Billy, I brought him on the yard.

Man: How did he die?

TD: Oh. My brother Bill, we were doing a . . .

Q: Describe what happened in the training process to becoming a journeyman.

TD: According to the union hall, it used to be a two or three year process and all that. But in what we were doing it was how hard you worked, and all of a sudden your pay increase came up because you were doing a good job. In our whole attitude in our mindset I think we were journeymen when we started. Let's go do this, and that's it. We thought we knew everything. The danger was just part of the job. My brother fell from a bridge in Fort Vermillion and got killed doing the same thing. My brother Vic fell in Vancouver and got killed. So I lost two of them and numerous friends that fell and got killed. But in my family there was two that fell and got killed – one fell from a bridge and one fell from a tower in Vancouver. He landed on the rebar. It went in here and came across and went dead centre of his heart and come out this side.

Q: Can you introduce yourself and talk about what you intend to talk about?

HD: My name is Homer Doucet. I'm retired. I used to have my own business. I worked around lots. I did bridge work, lots of bridge work. I did the overpass at Yellowhead here in '83, '84. I did the Barrymore Bridge; I did the Kenefu (?) Bridge. So I worked with a lot of these people. The safety--there was no safety. You did what you had to do. Whatever you had on site you used, and that's what you used. That's what you done. You didn't ask for anything. If you asked for anything, you were gone. You wanted to work; you had to work. You did whatever you had to do.

Q: What kind of work did you specifically do?

HD: I did form work, did concrete work, everything, bridgework. I framed; I did supervising. When I did the last crews, I ran 60 people. Then I quit that; it got to be a little bit nerve-racking. So I went to building houses and built houses for a living.

Q: What work did you do on the CN Tower?

HD: I didn't do much work there. I didn't do much. I tried the rebar work, but it wasn't for me. So I went to school and went into carpentry.

Q: How did you get started in the business?

HD: I just went looking for work. Farm boy, big, so got the job and that's what I did. I did it and it wasn't for me. So I kind of quit the rebar work. But I had lots of friends. My brother-in-laws, my friends, they were all into rebar. There was lots of people. So I could've got into the trade pretty easy, didn't need qualifications. But it didn't matter in those days in the trades, even in carpentry. Once they knew you could do the work, once you proved what you did, you got the money. If you didn't prove it, you didn't get no money, but you weren't there long either. And the safety wasn't there. You tried but it was just here. There's lots of times we knew it was unsafe but we done it anyway. If you didn't do it, you didn't work. That's the way the people were. The worst part, you'd give them all your body for a year or two doing all this work; when the job is finished, there's no recognition for you at all. Nothing, nothing.

Q: Did you want to add anything?

TD: Ya, when he was talking about people coming on the job, it was not because you're big and strong. When Larry started with us, he was about 140 pounds and skinny, and Hughie was the same thing. Maybe I was a little bit taller and a little bit bigger man, but the muscle mass in your body didn't get you the job. I think sometimes the muscles you had in your head got you the job. You didn't care; you just went to work. Everybody was wiry, just a bunch of wiry people. It's solid, hard work. You could pack 300 pounds and you didn't look like you could pack this 350 pounds. But you did it. It was a matter of pride within yourself – if they can do it, I can do it.

Q: When would you have to pack 350 pounds?

TD: Like Hughie related to and Larry said, some of them bars were 300 pounds and two people packing it. That's basically our day's work. I don't think you'd pack anything that was under 100 pounds as far as rebar goes. If there was smaller bars, then you'd get a bigger handful. Instead of picking up three number 5s, you'd take twenty on your shoulder and take off. I used to have blood coming off my shoulder. We never had shoulder pads. You had your T-shirt and that was it.

Q: Was there ever a case where the guys got together and said you're not going to put up with this or that?

TD: Not really. It was in your blood, something you liked to do. No matter what circumstances, you were going to do it anyway. Of course the dollar at the end of it is like a carrot on a stick; there's a dollar to it, and that's what you want.

Q: Was the pay fairly good compared to other jobs you could've gotten?

TD: It was quite equal at that time. When we first started, the pay scale was quite low. We didn't start getting big money until we finished the CN Tower. Then we started getting in the \$5, \$6, \$12 range.

Q: What was the pay like on the CN Tower?

TD: I think I got \$1.92.

HD: I remember I was getting \$2.40 but maybe that was later on towards the end.

TD: There was people started that was only getting \$1 or \$1 something; \$1.25. In those days it was high paid considering what we were doing. People were paying \$150 for rent. So \$1.25 was money.

LA: Lots of people weren't working either, lot. So people still starving. That's why you had to work, do your day's work.

TD: When I worked for the government, I kind of observed people. I analyzed people with the government. But when you start looking at people working, how fast they work, it seemed like nothing mattered except the job you're on and the people you're with. Outside didn't exist. We had fun. I remember one day there was a piece of plywood blew off the tower and right into the park where all these guys were drunk from the night, laying in the grass, and the plywood's coming down. Nobody's yelling; they can't hear you. You're up 200 feet. How are they going to hear? One landed on the ground and embedded itself and we sat there and laughed. That looked funny as hell.

Q: First I'll get you in. Introduce yourself. Then you can talk about whatever you want.

DK: My name is Dennis Redhorse Kopp.

Q: Tell us about your experiences as an ironworker.

DK: I worked for McCurdy Steel and they had me in the yard working steel for a little while. Then I got up top with these guys, and away we went. That's all I can really put out. Billy Daniels and Herman Daniels and a whole bunch of us all worked together.

KB: We were called McCurdy's Indians. If you wanted something done, we'd get out there and get it done. They had other companies come in and they weren't working fast enough. So they called McCurdy and got McCurdy's Indians out there. Well we ran from morning till night. We never had no cranes or anything to move the rebar. So we had to bar it off of the trucks. It would come in in trucks in fairly long lengths and we would have to bar it off. Oh, my name is Kelly Beauregard, well most people call me Ivan, but I wouldn't really say to do that; it kind of pisses me off. But anyways, my name is Ivan Beauregard. I've been in rebar for a long time and then I switched over to structural ironworker because I hurt my back a few times. People inexperienced that you're working with would come out and we'd pick up a load of a fair bunch of rebar. But then you'd put them on your shoulder and the person ahead or behind you would slip or fall, and the impact of somebody falling with the whip of the rebar would hurt you. Sometimes we were just packing with no T-shirts on or nothing, just bare skin. Once you get your shoulders and everything adjusted to the heat and the rebar, it wouldn't be much trying to hurt you if they hit you on the shoulder. That's for sure. We used to pack all day. We did the James MacDonald Bridge; I think it was for Hughie Edgar here. We packed and packed and packed, and that's a long bridge. They would bring it up to so far and then they'd pour the concrete and they'd bring out more rebar.

HE: They were known as Packies.

KB: And we'd pack all day. Well there was certain people that done the packing and then certain people that would do the tying. Some of the people were faster tiers than others and some were pretty green on the job.

Q: Can you explain the tying?

KB: Oh, there's all kinds of different knots that you can tie with rebar. There's a saddle tie and there's a snap tie, which is usually used on slabs and flat pieces. Then there's a saddle tie, which you use on a wall. But when you use a saddle tie you have to use a wrap so the bar don't fall down. You put a double wrap, use double wire, especially the one that you're tied off to you; put a double wrap.

Q: So you made those decisions right on the spot?

KB: Yes. There was no specifications for what kind of tie you used unless they told you before you started that they wanted double-wire ties or single-wire ties, or whatever. But you and your partner worked together all the time. One guy would work on top on the wall and one guy would work on the bottom. Usually the guy on the bottom was the one that stood up the rebar. He was working the hardest. All you're doing is hanging on the wall and you tie the top half and he ties the bottom half as high as he could reach. There wasn't too much machinery; so you had to do it all by hand. The thing is that some people were a little slower than others. If you didn't keep up with the one that's tying, well then they'd find somebody else and your job was gone because you weren't working as hard as the rest of the guys.

Q: And slowing down the whole process.

KB: Yes. They had a deadline and I can see their point. They wanted to make money. If it was done before the deadline, then they would get probably a bonus. We never seen it, the guys that I worked with. Sometimes at Christmas though, they'd give you a turkey or something like that.

Q: How easy was it in those days to fire a person who wasn't a good worker?

KB: As long as it took you to talk, that's how long it took to fire somebody if they weren't doing their job. It all depended on the foreman or whatever, somebody that was supposed to be pushing. They didn't have blueprints like they do nowadays. They had different rebar. Everything is plastic-coated now so it doesn't rot, and stuff like that. But them days, if you didn't hold up your end of the bargain, you were gone. You get to know all the guys and stuff. We would work together and then play together after work, go for a couple beers after. You work hard all day. If you got lunch, if you brought lunch, then you could eat it at a certain time. But if you were in the middle of a slab or something like that, then the concrete is right on your ass. You didn't stop for lunch; you stopped for lunch after you get to the end of the slab. When you were working on slabs, then you had to wait for the electricians to put their tubes and stuff in the concrete and they had to fasten it down, and you worked around it. Things like that, and every

floor was the same. Then you'd do the columns and make up your columns, and most of that was all pre-bent because all these guys were in the yard pre-bending the iron and they got all the measurements of the inside of the columns and stuff. Some were heavier than others. We couldn't build it on the ground like they do nowadays. You could pre-tie all the bars into a column and then if you had a crane, then you could stand it up and tie it into place. You'd just move the stirrups which go around the bars. You'd just move them down and then you'd tie it and cut it loose. You'd climb up the column and undo it. Then you'd move on.

Q: What do you mean, if you had a crane?

KB: We didn't have cranes. They came out probably in 1970 or '71 and they would give you something to offload the iron. But before that, 1968, '67, well we were using stuff that was made up by the employer. McCurdy Steel, he had a bunch of old army trucks with a winch pole, and he would pick up all the stuff and bring it as close as he could. Then after that we had to pack it. Once you start packing, well when I first started, my shoulders were just bleeding. All my buddies didn't seem to give a shit you know. Then you'd go home and the girlfriend or the wife would say, well what's the matter with you? Well, this for one thing. Once you got used to it. . . But if you had a guy like Ted whipping and beating you while you're putting up the iron, well he was actually pretty good. But some of the guys that you worked for were bad; they were bad.

Q: So when the CN Tower was built, you didn't have a crane on that job?

KB: They had a crane for the carpenters and stuff, for the forms that they raised up in the air. They'd assemble it on the ground. It was a tower crane. But that was rare. When they put up the tower crane, well then everything got easier and you didn't have to pack it up the stairs or pull it up on ropes. But on the bottom floors, until they got so high that they could put the tower crane there, because it has to stabilize, and then you could put a tower crane. But until that time, you worked your butt off. It was actually not too bad, because everybody pitched in and done a good job. Once you got the first floor and the slabs all in and the electricians were working, that's the only time I've ever seen electricians work. They'd bring up all their tubing and stuff; it used to be all different. Nowadays they just run it through the walls and stuff like that. I don't know; I'm not an electrician. But they used to have to keep up. If we done one floor, they were in there before we got there and they put all their boxes down to the plywood. The carpenters were there first, and then they didn't have to worry about it. Then you'd do a ring around and then you'd lay all your rebar. You had to thread through all this electrical that the electricians put down, then you'd tie that slab and then put another slab on top of that. Then for the next floor you'd build all the columns, but once the crane started, then you could fab them and then it would start going faster.

Q: Did any of you witness any kind of accident or incident?

KB: I think one time there they were doing a wall, and we had already put the rebar in it. They were putting a form up on the outside and then they'd self-stand it and then we'd put a rebar in it, then put another form on the other side. When they started pouring the concrete, they

vibrated it too much and it forced the form to fall apart, because all the rocks go to the bottom and it has a pushing tendency. But that one, they vibrated it too much and the whole form just busted out and all the concrete went down the hole. Then you get the elevator shafts where you're doing walls all the time, and that goes up with the building. But I never seen too many guys fall in them days. If you were doing walls or stuff like that, we had our ropes like the rest of the guys. You had to hang on the wall, and it actually went pretty goddamn fast. We'd have to wait sometimes but you didn't stand around waiting; you had to do something else. You get caught standing around: they're asking you why you're standing there.

Q: Did you experience anybody being hurt?

DK: Oh ya, but I got hurt after that. I lost a lot of hair. I fell backwards, hit a rock. I laid in that water and rock for awhile, got up, and I got somebody to take me to the hospital.

Q: But this wasn't on the job, Dennis?

DK: No, but I was working for some lady.

Q: But on the job, did you?

DK: I'm not sure. This arm was on the job.

Q: But you do remember when Billy Daniels was killed; I remember you telling me about that.

DK: Ya, Billy Daniels and I were great buddies.

Q: I want to show you a picture. I believe that's you.

DK: That's me.

Q: What are you doing there?

DK: We put this. . .

KB: Self-suspending bridge.

DK: Ya. I told the boss, I'll ride sugar foot across when you opened the bridge. That's in East Kelowna.

Q: Weren't you afraid?

DK: No.

Q: Is that you there?

DK: I think it is; if it's not me it's Billy. It could be Billy Daniels.

KB: No, it's you.

DK: Is it? Oh okay.

Q: Did you used to work in rodeos?

DK: Ya.

KB: Lots of us did.

Q: Talk a bit about the rodeos.

DK: Well Hughie could tell you more about the rodeos. . . . Well I didn't do much rodeoing. I moved the animals around but I didn't do much. Her brother and him, Billy, I think Tommy, they were all in rodeos riding bulls and broncs and you name it. Wild horse races and stuff like that. But in them days...nowadays it's like a show. Nobody really, well the minute that you take the bucking cinch off, you do your eight seconds. The minute that you do your eight seconds they take the bucking cinch off the horse and he quits. He just walks around like a normal riding horse.

Q: Did you used to do some of the riding?

KB: Ya, lots of it.

Q: Why did you do it?

KB: I liked it. I like horses. I've always been with horses.

KB: Ya, him and Hughie, they were working down in Rainbow Valley. I used to hang around down there cuz I had a horse too.

Q: You were talking about some kind of saucer.

KB: No, but braces with rebar wire so it was perfectly straight. Sometimes you couldn't put wood on it. They were probably eight or ten foot columns. That would be one there and that would be one there. Then they formed it all in and poured the concrete. But to get it to stand there we had to put it all together and then tie it, and go up and tie each stirrup, which circles around the rebar. Then you would keep going and then you would hook on, get it stabilized, and then you'd hook on. You'd stand on some of the stirrups and then you'd move yourself up the column. You had to take a long wire and then you would twist it to make it stronger, and then you'd tie it down to the slab on the bottom and that would stop it from falling over. Depends on

which side you were on, you had to put a little more on the opposite side so it wouldn't fall over that way.

Q: The other thing you talked about was when UI would send people out onto the site because they thought it was a good job for the unemployed. Then they had a problem when they got to the top.

KB: That wasn't on rebar. That was on structural ironworkers. Then we were working on the precipitators out at Sundance, west of the city of Edmonton. The Unemployment Insurance wanted us to take workers and start them on structural iron, but we were already up quite a ways – 200 or 250 feet. In them days you didn't have ladders or anything like that. You had to climb the columns. If you couldn't get up the columns, you didn't work there. You had to climb up the columns and then go to the next floor, and then they'd put in a bunch of beams. But Unemployment wanted us to take new members. I was in the union then. We were walking around, me and Tommy and all those guys, we were walking around up there. We'd always make a platform, probably about half of this building, and we'd put cue decking down there. Every floor was the same. You'd put the cue decking in that one spot. Then you'd take all the bolts and put them up so you didn't have to climb down to the bottom to get them. That was the tough part, was getting all those cans up there. But in them days they had cranes and you could just swing it in with a swing stage. The safety factor was there – you had to tie off when you got in the basket or whatever. But most of the time you had to climb the columns. They didn't have ladders. If you didn't want safety up there to pick at your ass all day, then we'd leave the bottom stairway out. We'd put the stairway for the second level and third level and fourth level, but we wouldn't put a bottom stairway. Because once safety got up there, then they were picking at you – you can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do this. Most of the time you're hanging upside down up there. Some of the beams were pretty big. You had to pin them and lean over and put the bolts in. We didn't have no tie-offs or anything like that. So once the Unemployment office told us to take these people, well, out of probably 30 that they sent us, 29 of them went home. We might get one that had no sense like the rest of us, but we kept him. But most of the time they'd take them up with the crane and they'd set them down where we kept the bolts. Then everybody worked from there, then the next level, next level, next level. But after we got at pretty near 250 feet to the top of the precipitator tower, and that's when they wanted us to take these newlyweds – that's what we called them, newlyweds or green. Everybody would razz them and stuff like that. We didn't tie off in them days; nowadays, if you go six feet off the ground, you have to put a rope on. Well, you're going to hit the ground anyway with a six-foot rope. It's only eight foot and the stretch on some of them nylon ropes, I don't really know what the stretch is, probably two inches for every foot. But we'd take them up there and the people would walk out. For us it was like walking on sidewalks but for them even a wide beam would be--I don't know how it looked in their eyes but they'd walk out there and then all of a sudden they'd sit down because they'd realize where the hell they were. They'd sit down and you couldn't budge them. They were frozen. It wasn't cold; it was just because they were so goddamn scared that they would not let go. So one guy would come up in front, walk out on a beam, and tell this guy.

DK: Was he wearing a diaper?

KB: I would swear some of them were. But after they'd filled their pants and realized where they were, we'd go out. The biggest guy would go behind him and grab onto him and then the other guy would smack him in the onion, knocked cold. Then we'd bring the cage up and put him in the cage and then take him back down to the ground. Well, we had so many belts. I think that's where Hughie got all his belts, from all these guys from Unemployment Insurance telling everybody you gotta have a belt when you come to the job. I don't know whether the government bought them or they had to buy them. But we all had our own belts, and nobody gets to use our belts, just us. Touching somebody else's belt: that's a no-no.

Off camera [Hugh Edgar?]: The CN Tower was a casted place concrete, and there was no high beams or structural steel in it. In other buildings it'll either be cast place concrete or on structural steel we'd put a concrete shaft up and then they anchored to that. Your floors are structural steel and then they put a cue deck and then they put some mesh in there.

Off camera [Hugh Kopp?]: You can see it in some of them pictures there, the cue decking and the structural steel.

Q: Say your name before you talk, okay?

LA: My name's Larry Avery and I want to just talk about Sam Ashman, which was our boss, the builder of the CN Tower. Sam Ashman was 35 years old when he built the CN Tower. He started off his business when he was a young guy, 21 years old. He borrowed \$5,000 from his in-laws and by the time he got to the CN Tower he was 35 and he'd already built houses, buildings, and everything else. He built the CN Tower; then he went to the Coliseum and built that. He built a couple more in Edmonton. Then he went to Calgary and done the Marlborough Mall, the Royal Bank Building, Camry Place, Mount Royal Golf Course, Westbrook Mall. So he was quite an entrepreneur. Then he went on to selling airplanes. He sold quite a few airplanes and almost sold one to Oprah Winfrey. He did quite well at everything that he did. Then his daughter got taken away from him and they wanted a \$5,000 ransom, which was a lot of money in them days, and they wanted it all in \$20 bills so they could easily cash it. But anyways, they caught the guys and stuff. Then after that, Sam decided he didn't want to live in Canada no more. So he moved to Florida. He had two places in Florida. So he moved to Florida and resided there for a few years and passed away at the age of 82. He still has four daughters and a wife still living. It was quite nice that we got a little bit of history about the man that helped us get going really. He was our start to the whole project, I think. Quite a few of us started there; I did and Hughie did. He was Mormon. It was kind of nice to know that about him anyways.

Q: You mentioned that the CN project got done quite fast.

LA: Ya, it was started in '64 and it was supposed to go till '67. We finished it in 1966 and it was open February 14, 1966, it was opened for business.

Q: Why did you say it was done very quickly?

LA: It's just the pressure that they put on us – we have to do this, we have to do this, we have to do this. We had a couple leaders there that was pretty hard pushing and stuff like that. McCurdy Steel was a hard-pushing company at that time. If worked for McCurdy Steel, you could pretty well get a job anywhere with anybody, because they knew that we could make them money. Back then the dollar was tight. They bid the job and they bid it tight basically. If you wanted to make money in the business, you had to give her hard. That's basically what it was all about in them days, was the hard dollar money.

HE: So much a ton. The more tonnage you could get in, the more money they made.

Off camera: It takes eight hours a ton, and McCurdy probably did that one for two hours a ton.

LA: And you bid the steel by the ton. So you have to manage that throughout. There's lots of people bidding on the job, big companies and stuff. I think there's only one rebar company in Canada right now, and it's Herod Steel.

Off camera: A&H?

LA: No but they're all owned by Harris Steel. They were all bought out by Harris Steel.

Q: Introduce yourself and talk about your work.

HK: I'm Hugh Kopp, a semi-retired ironworker. Still want to work, but not too many jobs out there yet for old guys. I started out. I didn't work on the CN Tower. I worked in the yard cutting and bending the steel that went to the CN Tower. Same thing; the job was bid by the ton. The faster those guys worked in the field, we had to work as fast to get the steel out to them, cutting and bending. The yard is the place where we received the steel. Then we cut it up into the lengths that they needed. It was all colour-coded so that they know what lengths it was, and we'd bend stirrups for their columns or their beams. We did that all in the yard. The harder they worked, the harder we had to work to get it out to them on time. We'd have to get everything ready a week prior to when they needed it. Sometimes we'd have to work over the weekends and a few extra hours at night just to make sure it was ready. When they were ready to go, they needed the iron; they couldn't be waiting. A couple pieces short, then the whole thing shuts down. So we always had the steel ready to go. It was a tough life. We ran in the yard. Just as much as they ran out in the field, we ran in the yard. But we had it a little bit easier. We had trucks to haul our bundles. We had big army trucks with an A-frame that old Charles McCurdy built and we could haul our steel around, and that's what we loaded our trucks with. We put 40 ton of rebar on a trailer and get it hauled out to these guys. We didn't work all weekends. That was our time to relax. By relaxing, we used to go to rodeos and ride the rodeo. I rode bareback in the rodeos. Didn't make any money in it but sure had a lot of fun. Drank a little whiskey. We'd party on the weekends, go to rodeos. Sometimes we'd travel 100

miles just to go to the rodeo and get on a horse for eight seconds, and that was it. Then we'd go party. But we rode. We had a good time. We did a few hotels.

Q: Name of few of the towns you went to.

HK: Tofield, Smoky Lake, Thorhild – all the local towns around here. Drayton Valley, that was a good rodeo in Drayton Valley. Sandy Lake.

Q: How does a guy get onto a rodeo?

HK: You show up and pay your entry fee. It was only \$20 or \$30. You just pay your entry fee and they drew a horse. They had all the horses or bulls. I just rode bareback. I was always scared of saddle bronc because I seen a lot of guys get hung up, get their feet caught in the stirrups. Needless to say, riding with the bareback you're holding on with one hand. I got hung up in the rigging and I couldn't get off. I fell off, I got bucked off, and the only way that my hand come free was when the horse stepped on my face and pushed me away. But still rodeoed. That's where I met my wife. I was taken away in an ambulance and she was ambulance attendant. Well it wasn't an ambulance attendant, just semi-first aid – we just had a station wagon. I was just put in the back of a station wagon and taken to the hospital. Spent a couple weeks there and healed up, back to work and back to the rodeo.

Q: You wanted to talk about the effects that injuries would have on the workers.

Off camera: On the CN there was a few guys got burnt by the cad welding and stuff. Luke Rabu was one. There was a couple of other guys; I didn't know their names. When Paul fell down there, he was working with two guys that were twins. They were in the elevator shaft at the time Paul fell, and they both, I think, ended up in the insane asylum because they saw--they were the first ones down to see Paul stuck on the rebar and stuff. The one guy reached out to grab Paul and he couldn't get him. Then he blamed himself for it. He just about fell himself. His brother grabbed him and held him back, and if he wouldn't have done that they would've all went down. Then these guys, I heard they went into an insane asylum. For how long, I don't know. We never had any contact with them after that; they weren't back to work. So I don't know. Nobody I don't think ever heard of them after that.

Q: When you finished a project on time or ahead of time, did you as workers see any benefit from that?

LA: No.

Off camera: I seen it with Ledcor, because it's a Christian union; it's not an American union. But I seen it with Ledcor.

LA: We never got nothing out of it other than the next job – we stayed with them for the next job, which was good, cuz there wasn't a lot of work back then. So you kind of hung with the same company if you could.

Off camera: The union don't allow it either, to work on bonuses.

LA: But I wasn't in a union at that time. I was just hired on from a friend. I didn't join the union until '74 and they cornered me. It was on the Safeway building here on Jasper Avenue. I went into the toilet. I saw the union man coming and I gotta go try and hide from him. So I ran into the outside toilet there and sat in there and waiting and waiting. He come over and knocked on the door – Larry, you may as well come out and sign up, cuz I can stay out here longer than you can stay in there. So that's when I signed up.

HK: Well I was just saying with me like I worked about five years in the yard and then I said, well you know I think it's time for me to go out in the field and learn how to place this rebar. First day on the job, two union guys come up to me and says, sign here, you're gonna join up the union. I guess so.

Q: Did the union do any good for you?

HK: Health and welfare, pension. I'm collecting a good pension now. Any drugs or physical therapy, chiropractor – that's all paid for by the union. Glasses, orthotics – it's all paid for.

LA: The pension is really good. I think every kid today should have a pension or work for somebody that does have a pension.

Q: Has there been a history of discrimination against Metis workers?

TD: Let's go back to the history of the Metis in the early days. The Metis were known as free men because they didn't want land, they didn't want reserves, they didn't want nothing. They wanted to roam and hunt and make a living that way. So they became known as the free men. When they come out of--my grandfather was in the 1st World War and lost two brothers. When they came out, the government gave them land by Fishing Lake, a piece of land there. In 1939 they decided to make a colony and they made it around his land around that lake. That's when the commission came into play to make at the time they were colonies, not settlements. So, before that, there is discrimination of all Aboriginal people, not just the Metis. Discrimination was there. But as time goes on, by the time we come onsite with the CN Tower and all that, we had no ties to what were the discrimination laws. We're all part French, English, Irish, and we were all living in mainstream white Caucasian society. So discrimination didn't involve before the job and definitely not after the job. We didn't get the jobs because nobody else wanted them. I'll correct that. We got these jobs because other people couldn't do it; that's how we got them. We didn't care. It's work. Along with work and the money, I think there was a big sense of pride that you done this. I think the pride overrode everything, that you were doing this and doing a good job of it. Being sought after by others just made the pride swell a little more,

because you knew people wanted you to do it. So discrimination never played a part with the ironworkers or even the carpenters in town. Construction workers were not discriminated against, and they didn't take hand-me-down jobs. I think Hughie can attest to that. You'll find Metis people higher up in companies – superintendents, general foremen, CEOs – because they're good at what they do and they want to do it. There's people out there that are on the job for a buck, because they get paid. We took these jobs because we wanted to work; we wanted to do something good – I guess leave a legacy, in other words, that we done that. Now I drive through town with my great-grandkids and I'll say, ya, papa worked on that one; papa worked on this one. Papa started that one; papa done that bridge. It makes you feel good that you're leaving behind something for generations of Metis kids to come, that were involved in Edmonton at that early time, the development of the city.

Q: We're all part of the human race.

TD: I worked for the government. What I found out is there's reverse racism. You go into different areas; we call it land-based worksites, in other words reserves. People generate the racism that comes out of there by simple language. There's they and we. That in turn turns unbiased people in racist people because of statements made: we and you, we're white, you're brown. That's where racism comes from.

Q: Is there pride in Metis people that it means something to be Metis?

TD: I guess you gotta go back in history quite a ways – Red River, presently Winnipeg. That was the birth of the Metis nation. I had a colleague one time; he was talking about First Nations: you guys were here first. I told him, you know what, we as Metis people became people nine months after the European invasion. Before that there was no Metis; there was no mixed bloods. It's when the white and the Indian got together; hence you got the Metis. When you look back at the history of Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel, they're the ones that made Metis as they are today. There's a lot of pride. I spent years with the Metis Nation as CEO of their Metis Child, chaired the board for Metis Child Services. These are the things that you feel proud of, something you've made and established that will continue in time to come.

Q: You talked about the network of word of mouth with getting jobs. Were there mainly Metis workers on the CN Tower?

TD: No, it all depends on who you are, attitude, how hard you can work, and how much shit you can take.

Q: But you recommended and recruited each other.

TD: I think you recruit each other because you knew who you were hiring. You know how good they could work, you know the whole person, who they were. You know who can drink and who can beat you up. You had to watch who you fired.

Q: If we were to make the statement in this film that the Metis ironworkers were the ones who built the CN Tower, would that be a correct statement?

TD: Ya it would be, because the majority of us were Metis; you'll have to ask the other guys. Hughie? The majority on rebar was Metis, right?

HE: Oh ya, for sure.

TD: Ninety-five percent of McCurdy Steel I'd say was Metis.

Q: And that's because of the way people were recruited.

TD: Well ya. I could be having a beer with this guy over there and he says, how do you like your work? Well, come with me; we'll give you a job. That's it.

Q: I wanted to address it a bit in this film, because that's what people will immediately think.

TD: Well see there's racism anyplace you go if you look for it. Most of these people are yelling about racism – they look for it. Well they'll find it, because they don't feel comfortable if nobody calls them rotten so and so.

Q: Was there any other issue you wanted to address while you're here?

TD: I think I wrote something down. . . . Vic had what we used to call nine lives. I was doing a job in Wabamun. There's two towers and there's a walk across but no grating. The grating was gone. Montreal Engineering came to my office and said, do you know this guy, Vic Daniels? I said, ya. Roy Delain? Ya. He said, I want them off the job. Why? They're the two best connectors we had. He said, they're running on the handrail across from one to the other. What's a handrail, one inch, two inch? They're running on the handrail to go from tower to tower instead of crawling down and coming over. So he wanted us to remove them. This is what Vic was like. I just drew a picture here awhile ago for Hughie. We were in Calgary doing the Toronto Dominion Square--500 and some odd feet. The crane shut down because of wind. This is a tower going over a building. At the end here there's a six-inch beam about eight feet in the middle of nowhere. This little dot here is Vic standing there. So I got on the radio. He was bolting for me. I said, what the hell are you doing there? He said, I'm just checking the wind. So he turns around and walks back into the building. The city police just about died; they were looking at him. But I didn't quite say it that way. I used some harsh words. The Department of Transport took our radios away for two days.

Q: So the guy was a joker.

TD: He was a prankster, very much so. He just loved being that prankster. I remember a time he was coming down out of Wetaskiwin. He was at a little bridge and he flew over the creek into the bush. The RCMP was there. STARS came in and landed to pick him up. He was laying on the

stretcher. A very good friend of mine was an RCMP, Tom Sinclair. So he's laying there and he goes like this to Tom Sinclair. Tom gets on his knees in the snow and he's putting his head right to his ear. Vic said, I've got four cases of beer in that truck; don't let them freeze, okay? Who was the first person Tom phoned? Me. Didn't want them to freeze.

Q: There was a story about snuff too.

TD: Oh, you'll have to edit that. Well, everybody in the winter, especially up north because of the harsh cold, a lot of people chew instead of smoke. It was easier. You can't stand there with a cigarette. So you'd pop a can and have a chew. We're doing the job in Scotford and Vic was my hookup man. Everybody's coming to him for a chew of snuff. Some of these guys took big mouthfuls. I said, you're going to go frickin' broke on snuff. Don't worry, he said; I've got it all fixed. Next day he comes out with a box of snuff just dry like powder. One guy took a chew and he spat it out and said, God that's dry. Vic said, I'll fix that – pulls down his pants, pees into the box, gives it a shake, puts it in his pocket. We were there for four months; nobody asked him for a chew again. He stopped that.

Q: What were the weather conditions like on the job?

TD: We were up north where my brother got killed in Fort Vermilion. We were doing the first bridge built in Canada. There was two in Germany that failed; we were doing a third in Canada. The valley of the Peace River was 63 below. Nobody stopped. The only thing we couldn't do was impact the bolts, because they'd snap; three quarter inch bolts, it'd snap them off. We just kept working. Nobody went in to warm up; we just stayed outside. This is structural steel. You're not lifting a whole pile or crawling on steel and putting in bolts. Once in a while you'd warm your butt, but nobody stopped. We went through the whole thing, and that was about three weeks of 63 below.

Q: There's a point at which it gets dangerous, people suffer from hypothermia.

TD: Not if you're dressed for it, no. As far as dangerous, I firmly think from the start to the finish in iron work is dangerous. When you look at us when we used to rodeo, there was danger there too. It seemed that we followed the danger. Larry, in fast cars, they're dangerous. Larry was there. If there's danger, you'll find us down there. Danger, you'll find us down there.

Q: We'll use that line in the film. . . . What about the conditions in which you worked?

HK: I don't know. We just worked. It was just normal, cold. We just worked.

Q: Did you ever find that the weather created a dangerous situation?

HK: Oh ya. I remember one time we were connecting some beams. You could barely hold them. The wind was blowing so strong. We had to pull them in – one guy would pull them in; the other guy would stick a spud in the hole to get them in place. There was always danger in it.

TD: But weather wise, it was wet. Even in the rebar part there was frost, frost on the pans and you slipped all over the place, frost on the forms. But that didn't deter us; we just kept going.

HE: It was just part of a day's work.

TD: I don't think I ever ran into anybody that said, it's too cold today; I'm going home. You'd reach in your pocket, pull out a balaclava, put it on and keep on going.

HE: Nowadays it's quite different. They won't let us work. They say you can't work under 25 below.

Off camera: If there's rain and lightning, they go sit in the lunchroom for three quarters of an hour.

Q: What about lightning?

TD: We never moved off for lightning at all.

Q: But you're standing on steel.

Off camera: That's okay; the building is grounded.

TD: In the mines they used to have pigeons in the mines. When they fell over, it was dangerous. Well, we had some people in there we put in the corner. If they fell over, we knew it was dangerous.

Q: Somebody mentioned about the wind lifting metal plates up.

TD: Ya, Larry was talking about that. These are the pans for concrete. There were these pans we used to use where all the steel goes in, and the wind would blow so hard that these pans would lift and float in the wind. We were still on top putting steel down. The faster you put the steel down, then the lift will be heavier. The turbulence is greater between floors. It tunnels right in there, enough you can see it move.

Off camera: They took us off of there because of it.

TD: Once ya. But see, there's the thing; you just brought up an issue here. You're 200 feet up when you're doing that – 200 feet, 20 feet, there's no difference. You get killed at 20 feet and that's 200 feet. So you work the same at 20 feet up; then you go 200 feet.

Off camera: You start at the bottom and work up.

TD: You don't even know you're up there. Same with structural steel, you start on the bottom and keep going up. You don't notice how high you are, you just keep going up.

Q: There were a couple of stories about...

TD: We were doing this bridge. It was only done in Germany twice, attempted in Germany twice. Everything was under water. We had big holes in the river and the forms were built in top, sunk down. The concrete was poured in there because we had these big shafts coming down. When we started pouring all these, they had to pour from the top and they had big four-foot pipe. You'd get it down there so you could pour the concrete down, and it would shake it all over. The concrete would force the water out and harden anyway, go up to the shaft, and then you're done. But we couldn't do that because they couldn't control the pipes taking the scaffold off. We were trying to find a way, everybody was – engineers, everybody, trying to find a way to calm this. There was an Aboriginal chap standing next to me from Fort Vermilion. He said to me, why don't you do like we do in the river? We set a net, wrap a rope around the stick, put it in the water--it doesn't move. So the two of us ran down, we took some cable and wound it around these big pipes, stuck them in there, let them go, poured the concrete--it didn't move. The engineer came to me and said, that's nice, where did you get that trick from? I said, an old Indian trick. I didn't tell him it was an old Indian told me that.

Off camera: There's some pictures there of that rebar that we tied.

Q: Let's get you to explain some of that.

TD: Larry will explain that when he comes up.

Q: Just talk about them as you're looking at them.

TD: That's a big form that our steel is all inside.

TD: That's the form we sunk down. That's Greg standing there.

HK: Here it is before, cuz all the rebar's sticking up before they formed it. They put in the piles and we had a frame on there. That's it there. These piles, we had little winches on top; you can see one there and one there. They're called hand crabs. That's what we let all this down into the river with.

KB: We'd crank it up, lift the whole structure, and then those skids were pulled out and we sunk it down to the bottom of the river.

Off camera: Ya, there it is right there.

Q: So those piles would be sitting on what?

Off camera: They're driven right into the river.

TD: We had piles all driven down. We had 16. We done the pile driving first. Then we had about 16 divers, a company out of Vancouver. Once they were all sunk, the divers are down there, and they put in pieces of rebar and closed the flaps and watched it pour until it hit the shaft. Then it would seal itself.

HK: We set 800 ton that that one pile weighed, and that's what we picked up by hand with hand crabs. Then the forms were taken out from underneath it. Then we just dropped it into the river with hand cranks.

TD: When we first got down there, we wanted to know the flow of the river. This guy come on up, he got a piece of stick, and he threw it out in the river. He said, now walk beside it. We couldn't. That's how swift the river was, and yet we had to work on the water in those conditions.

HK: There was a few divers that got stranded underneath there.

TD: Oh ya. One guy went in and drowned; the backhoe fell in. We lost men there; we lost quite a few guys on that site because of the conditions – open water, ice.

Q: Bridges are pretty dangerous, comparatively speaking.

TD: Ya. What really got me, some of those Dominion Bridge guys, when we were about three quarters done on that...We only worked in winter, couldn't do it in the summer; we only came back every winter. Then the engineers came down from Germany and they were quite happy to see it. Of course I'm an inquisitive bastard; so I asked why. He said, oh we tried two in Germany and they all failed. This was the third one. So they were monitoring it to see if it was going to fail or not. We fooled them, didn't we? It's still there.

HK: Ya, we built that bridge. The bridge is still there.

TD: Some of the girders were eight or ten feet high, five feet on the bottom and eight feet on top, 74 feet long, 75 ton apiece. These are the ones we're hanging with, had two big cranes on it.

Q: Back to the CN Tower, it was one of the first of its kind in Western Canada, right?

TD: Yep.

Q: Was there anything about it that was unique, being tried for the first time?

TD: No, it was just work. The only thing unique about it was they had these U-shaped bars coming out every floor. Our job was to go in there and load it with long bars and wrap stirrups

around them to become the pilasters. We had this tall guy used to do it all the time, and we'd call him Pilaster Pete. We had to work inside the building. You couldn't do it until the floors were poured, and this is why you saw people hanging all over the place.

Off camera: The cad welding too.

TD: That was unique, that was the first time here, wasn't it? The cad welding was the first time in here. It's a copper weld that fuses two bars together. All our columns were fused as we'd go up every floor, just fused together. Size 10.

HE: They were number 14.

TD: The bottom half, ya.

Off camera: 2.5 inch diameter. That's pretty big.

Q: So there was some stuff being tried for the first time in Western Canada.

TD: Ya, I'd say the cad welding was one of them. I think the pilasters, though, instead of now it's poured on the ground and put up there and welded in place. Here we had to build it in place as we came up. There were a lot of things that we tried in there. I think it worked. But at that time we weren't aware of what was unique. We were there to do a job. We'd go and do the job. We'd go to the Leland Hotel and drink beer, get in a fight, clean out the bar. The owner would kick everybody else out but us. We had the money.

Q: Why would you get into a fight in the bar?

TD: Release of tension, leave it at that.

Off camera: It was always their fault.

TD: Ya, it was their fault. They looked at us funny.

HE: There was this big Don Morin who's about 250 pounds and then there's a big Ukrainian, Sandy Carusi. They were going to start up their own outfit. What are you gonna call us? B&B Reinforcing. What is that for? They said, Bohunks and Bow & Arrows.

Q: For most of you, was your first ironworker job at the Tower?

TD: Most of us. We were all with 17, 19 years old. How old were you, Larry?

LA: I was 20.

TD: I was 21. Hughie was about 17.

HK: I was 16 when I started in the yard. I just about got fired. It was the second day I think, first day. Being a farm boy and that, the boss said, can you drive that truck? I said, well sure I can drive that truck. He says, okay get into it and I'm going to pull you in and we'll start it. I said, okay. I got in and he started pulling me. I popped the clutch; it started up. He says, okay drive it over here. Well I'm used to driving a body job and I forgot about the 50 foot trailer behind it. I went around the first corner and wiped out the corner of the gas shed. I said, Mac, I need this job; don't fire me. I said, I'll work this weekend for nothing just to fix it. He says, okay. I fixed the gas shed where I ripped off the corner. But I learned how to drive a tractor trailer after that.

TD: We had a lot of fun doing this. A lot of the times we'd go back to the steel yard. Leon's: that was the big steel yard for McCurdy. We'd get in the back with a great big fire and everybody would show up with a six-pack, and we'd sit out there and reminisce and drink beer.

HK: They used to pick up a form there and they'd lift it up high at the back and you could stand and watch the races there.

TD: We'd take the A-frame on a big flat pallet and lift it up and sit there and watch the races. We were right on the extreme west end of it, and that's where the yard was. Cabal Trucking was there.

Q: Let's do a few more of the pictures.

HK: Through my career I worked a lot up north in Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Cambridge Bay. That's Syncrude there; that's the big tower crane we had there. We were replacing that cable. We were shut down for a week there until we fixed the cable. That was me just on top there.

Q: Talk about the size of that crane.

LA: It was the biggest one. We'd put them all together.

TD: I think it was 500 ton capacity, wasn't it?

LA: Ya, cables that round.

Q: How long was that tower?

LA: 110 feet, I believe.

TD: The other thing we had was the things we'd get into. We went to Imperial Oil; they didn't want to shut the plant down. So we worked on the existing plant to bring it up. Everybody was working around with suit and Scott packs like we were in outer space. We just kept going. I got an award with a buckle for 500,000 man hours, accident free. I still have that buckle. That was

the award they gave me – 500,000 man hours, accident free. It was an operating plant. We just kept going up, going up, Scott packs.

Q: Did either of you get any training at a technical college?

TD: Late when everybody came structural. When you come to structural steel, you could take it right onsite. I took mine at the ?. You wrote yours where?

KB: I challenged mine, my government ticket.

TD: People used to go two years on field and two at NAIT or SAIT. That's good technical training. Some of the best ironworkers you'll find and steel welders is Alberta and Ontario. They are the top you can find. Ironwork Ontario, Alberta. When you get 50 percent practical and 50 percent theory, you get to know what you're doing pretty fast.

Q: You went to work for the government, right? What job did you do for the government?

TD: I was a parole officer, worked in corrections. I was the bad guy that kept sending people back to jail. Then I got seconded to Children's Services. They were doing a whole redesign. So I left Corrections and went to work for the Office of the Commissioner of Children's Services.

HD: My name's Homer Doucet and I'm originally from St. Paul de Metis. St. Paul, Alberta, used to be de Metis. The thing is, when I got hired as a carpenter or if I got hired as an electrician, I worked as electrician, I worked as a carpenter, I worked as a plumber. They were doing rebar or structural or whatever and they needed a hand; you were there. You helped the neighbour. If I needed a hand with my forms or anything when I went into forming, he was there. We'd work with one another. Then we got to know one another. Then we got to talk to one another and we went dancing together. But today it's not like that. Larry and I used to fish together moons ago. But today in the workforce it's not like that. The union changed lots of things. Everybody is to their own. You go on a jobsite--I'm a house builder. The electrician does his job, the plumber does his job, the heating guy does his job, and I got my job. If I dare send my guy there and if the boss catches me--where are you sending that guy? He doesn't get paid to do that. He doesn't get paid to do that, keep it over here. He can stand there for 15 minutes doing nothing, but he can't go help him there. It just changed so much. That's why there's no communication with the people. In our days we helped everybody.

Q: Who decides how the jobs will be allocated?

HD: The people that are estimating the job, the companies. When they started, at one time I worked for Ledcor Construction. Ledcor was a very good construction to work for, because we were never union. They tried to unionize us at that time, because we were called Intec at that time. Then Ledcor bought us out. They tried to unionize Ledcor, but Ledcor never got unionized with the American union. They got unionized by the Christian union. So it gives you benefits. The union was good – they give us benefits, they give us our wages. They did lots of good things

for us too. But with the way it's set up now with the insurances and everything, you can't do that. You can't do nothing. You gotta be qualified to do that job right there. Even in housing. I can do carpeting but if something happens to that carpet and I'm not qualified to do that carpet because I done it, we got no warranty on that carpet cuz I'm not qualified. Same thing with the boilers, the boiler systems that are coming out, hot water on demand. Don't just let anybody put them in, because they're very expensive to buy and then if you have trouble, where's his license number? No license number, no warranty.

Q: I was going to do it myself.

HD: Well then if you have trouble. . .

LA: This was mostly because when the unions came in, then everything started toughening up. The unions kind of got everything shoved around, straightened around, which was then you have to have a license. More or less a union come in, you have to have a ticket. So you had to write a test to get the ticket. You had to do a four-year term to get your ticket. That's what toughened everything up. Now I'm an ironworker and I go to my union hall as an ironworker. I can't touch a carpenter's tool, I can't do nothing. Up until that time, you could do anything you wanted to, but after that, no.

Off camera: There was a name for that.

HD: Ya, you were a scab if you'd touch my stuff.

Off camera: When we worked together, we worked with the carpenters in silos and tight spaces.

HD: You were brothers. We got to know one another. It's just like building houses. When I first built houses you could build a house – I was a carpenter, I've always been a carpenter. I've been a carpenter since I'm 20 years old. I built lots of houses and everything, and I built it with an insurance because of WCB like I was explaining to you before. But now we got a home warranty program; we got the home warranty program. Now you can't even be a contractor for a house now unless you've got a license. If you don't have a carpenter's license, you cannot pull permits. There's ten grand right off the bat for the home warranty program on housing. So it takes lots of people out of the business right there. They wonder why there's nobody working. Ten grand on a house. You wanna buy a house, you wanna build a house, ten grand just for the warranty. What's a warranty? But you try to tell them that.

Q: What's the difference between the two types of steel construction?

HD: Rebar is a sized rebar. You can have rebars from half inch. Well, in our days it was all imperial; today it's all metric – it's 10 ml, 15 ml, 25 ml, 30 ml. But these guys working at rebar, they had a colour code. A lot of jobs were done by colour coding. So they knew what bar. They didn't have to look too long, they just had to look for the colour code, and they knew their

colour codes. So it was easy for them. That was rebar. You put that in the walls with concrete. With structural now today, they pour the concrete and they bolt them in, and structural is there; it's a quick fix. What do they call them now? There's box stores, structural steel with box stores. A lot of the box stores are just done with structural steel now. So it's a totally different steel altogether. It's structural. It holds the building up.

Q: High rises too?

HD: Lots of high rises are done with structural steel too, ya sure. All your main beams and everything, they might be covered with concrete after. But they're steel in there. H beams sometimes, but those guys they put rebar in that CN Tower, they didn't have the beams.

Q: Hold this in front for the camera and talk about it.

LA: We were talking about a snap tie. That's just the bars sticking across like this; you just wrapped your wire around once. That's this picture. The second one is saddle ties. So you wrap your wire around each side of the bar going this way and back and tie it. Then there's a figure 8, goes around this way as then back around this way; so it really makes a figure 8. Then there's a snap tie with a wrap. So that would be just the same as this; only you go around this top bar this way. So that way this bar doesn't slide down because it's wrapped around this one. The same you can go on these other ones too. Any floor slab, like on the floor, you'd use a snap tie only. On walls and stuff you'd use a figure 8 or the saddle tie. Saddle tie is good so your bars don't slide down. Same on a stirrup, stirrup meaning the wraparound four bars like this. The stirrup goes around the outside; so you'd use a figure 8 on that. That's the different ties that we used. It's all rebar wire. You have a roll on the side of your hip, and you just pull the wire out and wrap it around the wire and tie it.

HD: Like Kelly was saying, they climb with that stirrup so it had to be tied properly. They climb it.

LA: They climb on top of it. You're walking up the wall. You've got your wall and you just keep walking up. So you wanna make sure you're standing on good wire and stuff like that. You can take this wire and pull it and break it. I can do one. This friend of ours, Oscar Robillard, he can double that wire and break it. It's got a tensile strength of 1,600 pounds, and he used to make money like that. I used to make money by breaking wire, but he can break two.

Q: In the CN tower, when you're wrapping the steel as you go up, how often would there be a wrap on it?

LA: Oh on the columns, they were pretty close together on the columns. The stirrups on the columns were pretty close. The column that's in the centre of the building, the columns are 36 bars sticking up like this. The other one comes down from the top and they just touch each other like this. There's a form on there called the cad welding, and they just touch like this. Then you strike a thing there and it just goes, psst, welded. You do all 36 and then the night shift

would do that and then the day shift would come in; that's all done. Then the carpenters would come in and do the next floor, lift it, then we'd come in and start laying our steel around the outside. But, like I say, once we got the pans down and were ready to go, we jumped on it right away. There's no railing around there or nothing, and we're working on the outside to put the first beam in. All around each floor there's a beam right around there. I can't remember, I think there's 24 bars in them beams, and you have to thread everything in there. So you're in different positions, no hooks or ties or nothing on us.

Q: So, under those conditions, in the whole construction of the CN Tower you only lost that one guy?

HD: Yes. A few guys got burnt with the cad welding.

HK: There was accidents, but just one death.

HD: I saw lots of accidents, especially up at Syncrude and Suncor. I worked up there for pretty near 40 years and I saw lots of accidents up there.

Q: Ironworkers?

HD: Ya. Cranes going over, four cranes going over – three of them laid down and the fourth one stood.

Off camera: Here in Edmonton we lost 12 ironworkers one year.

HD: Something like the truck driver there that hit that bus, two weeks of having a license, driving a truck on the road. Two weeks. The year was the contractor, but the truck driver only had been working for two weeks.

Off camera: That cad welding you were talking about was 80 percent more efficient than steel welding.

Q: How far did you have to go in school to get a job? You finished high school?

HD: Yes.

Q: You finished high school?

HD: No.

Q: What grade did you get to?

LA: Grade nine three times.

Off camera: I got half my grade 12--I got grade 6.

Q: When you come with that education and want to enter a training course, how is that handled?

LA: Well that's another reason I didn't go anywhere that way. In rebar you didn't have to have-- just needed training. First you gotta bluff your way in, and after you bluff your way in, you're away.

Q: So you never went to SAIT or NAIT?

Off camera: No.

LA: I didn't have to go but I still would've been okay. You can challenge the test.

HD: At that time it was way different than what it is today. Even in carpentry in my time I think you only needed grade 8 or grade 9. As long as you could do the math – cuz carpentry was lots of formulas – as long as you could do the math, you could do carpentry. But today, like I put guys through my company now and they all have to have grade 12. Are the kids stupider than what we were, or what?

LA: I applied to Syncrude for a job and I didn't have grade 10. So you can't get on with them. They gave me a test to write before they said no. But they said these stupid questions like if it rains there's a sheep that's got no fur, there's a sheep with a little bit of fur, and there's one with all the fur, which one does the rain run off the fastest?

Off camera: All the fur.

LA: No, without the fur, you'd think. But it wasn't, it was the middle one with part of the fur.

Off camera: How far did I go to school? Three miles, uphill both ways.

Q: How far did you go in school?

Off camera: I went to the end. I also went to college for two years. But uphill both ways, three miles.

Q: Let's do the other picture.

LA: Okay this is a pan slab. It's all steel. . . This is called a pan slab and it's all metal. It drops in the middle of it and goes down 18 inches, then each pan is 24 inches square. As you're walking carrying the steel, you have to watch you don't fall down in these little cracks in the pans. That's throughout. Around the outside of the whole pan slab is the beam that we're talking about, and then all this is on the inside. I can't remember how big a floor that was, but it was lots of pans.

So the wind would get underneath. This is all hollow underneath these pans from the next floor down. The next floor down wasn't nailed down or nothing closing it in. So the wind would come in like that and lift those pans right up. We were standing there and you could just see these pans popping like this. All there is is screws. So they screw it down onto a piece of plywood. The plywood just ran in strips like this and then the pans sat down on that strip and then there's plywood running this way with the pans screwed down to the strip. So there's lots of room to get underneath there. If you ever go into the CN here, look underneath in the car parking lot – you look and it's just like that right there, same thing underneath. But that's all hollow.

Q: So the purpose of those grooves is for soffits to give the strength, almost like a beam?

LA: Yes. Then they pour the concrete after, concrete on top. So down in here is all your big rebar. There's two rebar going this way, two going on the opposite way, and that's what makes your strength right there. Rebar wire is only to hold it in place until the concrete is poured. It's not to do anything with strength or nothing like that. But if you want it to stay there, you have to tie it a little better if you don't want it to fall apart. But if you do the floor and stuff, you just use a snap tie. You don't need to do anything fancy in your columns and stuff like that. You'd use a saddle tie and/or a figure 8 as you're going up. You're going to have to climb it in order to tie the top, or fly it in as one.

HD: That rebar's gotta be so far away from the forms too. So that's why they gotta tie it straight. Like he was saying, they put a cross tie with rebar there--that's what he was talking about--so they can bring the rebar sometimes a little bit more. So, when they put their forms, it was that way from the forms. That's what he was saying, that they put those cross braces with rebar wire.

LA: Another way to do concrete too is prestressed cable. I've done quite a bit of that. Prestressed cable is weaving – you weave like this and then you weave like this. Your cable is all in a tube like so. At the end they put a cup on there and no, you pressure it up to 150,000 psi and pull the cable tight. Then you just pull so much first, pour the concrete, then after you pull it the rest of the way. I don't know if you guys remember, but there was a building on the south side, apartment building, and all the floors all popped. I think there was four floors that popped and fell, but that was because they pressured it up before it was still green; the concrete was still green. It just popped and the concrete just flew all over the place and they had a heck of a mess up there.

Off camera: There was a guy in Calgary; when they were stressing cable, the end come off it.

LA: I fell at the water treatment plant. If it wasn't for the pre-stressed cable pump hoses, I'd have fell right down on the rebar.

Q: What's it like when you're in the wind up there walking on the pan as it's moving around?

LA: You're carrying rebar and you'd come to where you were supposed to put it down, and there's the edge right where you're sitting. The wind was blowing you so hard from your back, you just put the bar down and hit the deck.

HD: You're ready for it, it seems like. We never even thought of that stuff; you just did your work. We know it's going to be windy sometimes; we know it's gonna snow.

Q: On every one, you must've come close to meeting your maker.

HD: Definitely. We don't remember those.

LA: We'd drop stuff off the top or stuff would go off the sides.

HD: Oh definitely, everybody's gotta try it.

LA: We dropped a 20 ml rebar. It went down from the 19th or 20th floor; we dropped a piece of rebar. We were on the outside leaning back off those white pilasters and we're loading the bar, because you couldn't do it from the front. You had to be on the outside. So we were lowering it like this. If one guy don't hold his, it's gone. It just burned your hand; so you gotta let go. So we let go. It went down and hit a stirrup on down farther and ricocheted out like that and went down and went through one and a half floors in the parkade. It would've kept on going through the rest of the parkade but it hit a piece of rebar inside the concrete and ricocheted again and went out like that like a snake.

HD: Eight inches of concrete force, eight inches.

Q: What's the closest you ever came to personally cashing it in?

HD: I fell 32 feet. I fell standing up in snow, on my heel. I split my heel and that's when I had my first back operation. That was the difference with white people as bosses. I spent a year and eight months at the Misericordia Hospital and never did my boss ever come to see me. Never.

Off camera: If it'd been a Metis boss, he'd have brought some bannock to you.

HD: Yep, probably would've. That was my first accident.

HE: My name is Hugh Edgar. One time working at the university on a building there, I was on the truck hooking up the columns. The crane operator starting to lift them, and he's up on top watching me down below. Once he starts going, then he throws it in high gear and takes off. One of my gloves hooked the stirrup and away I went. I don't know how far I went but the engineer said I went by him on the third floor; he was going down. I missed the truck altogether and I landed on a big pile of wood there, and it broke my fall. I was in the army and I did a roll, like I was a paratrooper. So I got hurt but not really bad.

Q: Don't the crane operators watch for that kind of thing?

HE: Ya, but he couldn't see me because of the steel columns that block his view, and I was underneath him. But that was the old style cranes. He was standing holding a little box just looking over the edge, which wasn't a very good idea. Now there's people down below and up on top with radios.

Q: And the cabin that the operator is in is down the beam a bit, isn't it?

HE: Well it used to be at the end and sometimes now they're right at the mast.

Q: What did you have there that you were going to talk about?

HE: Well, another time in the wintertime, it was like 40 below and one of the crane operators picked up a heavy lift, and the crane snapped and the whole crane went over the side of the building. The guy standing close to it got killed. That was back in the '60s.

Q: Where was that?

HE: It was on 119th Street, I think, just off Jasper on a high rise.

Q: Could you talk about your SAIT training?

HE: I went to school but I guess I really didn't have to. But I did go because it had just started and they needed young people. So I went down there for six weeks the first time and the second time too. What they did was mostly about structural; there wasn't a lot about reinforcing. They'd teach you all kinds of things, how to splice cable and all kinds of different things. You've gotta be able to put a section of boom in a crane without, you gotta unhook the section then you gotta stretch it out. It's a whole process you go through. You gotta learn to tie 33 different knots. Like when you're an ironworker, you gotta know all your knots.

KB: If you have to bring somebody down from an area, you have to know the lift to put and the knots to put on that guy so it doesn't choke him by the time he gets to the bottom.

Q: So was there value in the SAIT training?

HE: Ya, it was good, but in my career I didn't use much of it. They were just starting and I think they've got it improved by now. Back then it was just, I don't know how to say it, wasn't really worth it.

KB: Going from the start of school then up to now you go, you go to a school now, it's completely different. Half of the stuff, like we learned fractions and now it's all metric. Some of the people can't convert now, the older people that learn fractions and stuff. Well we're all in

the same boat here. To get somebody to break it down, well if you don't know your mathematics you're not gonna do it.

Q: How far did you go in school?

KB: I went to grade 11. I went grade 10 but grade 11 was a pre-employment school. I was at St. Joseph's High School and because I couldn't go to any other schools cuz I beat up a teacher. That was the only reason that I couldn't go to any separate school. It was a pre-employment school. They said, you get your ass out of school, but you were taught. That's the only reason I had to go there. Otherwise I would've had my grade 12.

Q: Did you go to technical school after that?

HE: Nope, I just went to grade 11. . .

Q: How about you? You went to grade 12, right?

HE: No, I got grade 8.

Q: What happened after grade 8?

HE: I was working.

Q: How old were you?

HE: Oh, I was pretty young, 14 or something like that. I did my grade 9 but I didn't pass. I don't know how old I was.

Q: What was the first job you ever had?

HE: The first job I ever had, oh brother. It was working at a shoe wholesaler downtown that paid \$150 a month – Dollar Brothers. I went through many jobs. I worked in a body shop for three or four years; I got kind of a trade in body work. But that's altogether different now than it was back then. . . . I used to ride a horse to school in 1 and 2. It grade 1 to grade 12 I think. There was 33 of us, and half was Protestant and the other half was Catholic. It was quite the deal.

Q: Talk about why you hired Metis people through the years.

HE: Well I hired the Metis because I always had some working for me and they were good, hard workers. We just got along good with them, good production. They liked working and they always had some friends or cousins or whatever that had done the work, so they'd call me. . . .

HE: Tying steel, if you get fast at it, that's what they want is fast tiers. We used to do a lot of piling steel. When I first started it took eight hours to do a ton of steel, and I got a system figured out where you could do it in two hours of tying. Everybody still does it today just like that.

Off camera: When I worked for McCurdy, when I went out in the field we'd tie a slab and he'd say, I'll give you a nickel raise if you can beat me to the end. So I'd tie like a son of a gun and beat him to the end every week, and every week I'd get a nickel raise. When I started I was at \$1.25.

Q: How did you feel when you finished the CN Tower?

HE: Well it was a pretty big high building, the highest one in Western Canada. I was kind of proud of it. It's a good talking thing when you're talking or bragging or whatever. My wife was, I'm working up there and looking over the edge and she's coming down whatever avenue that was and she was on the float in the parade. She worked for Ruby Sharon. She was on the float.

Q: Does CN Tower mean anything to you?

KB: Ya it was competitive, it was educational. Made a lot of friends. The next job was the same thing all over again.

Q: Do you guys stick together, or was it just us that pulled you together?

KB: No, we keep in touch all the time. We're all getting old together.

Off camera: Older, uglier and meaner.

[END]