

Métis Ironworkers

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Interviewers: Muriel Stanley-Venne, Don Bouzek, Winston Gereluk

Interviewees: Larry Avery (LA), Ivan Kelly Beauregard (IB), Tom Daniels (TD),
Homer Doucet (HD), Hugh Edgar (HE), Hugh Kopp (HK), Denis Redhorse Kopp (DK)

Q: Where were you born?

LA: Born in Dresden, Ontario in 1944. My grandparents came from Cadillac, Michigan. They were Native.

Q: How did your folks make a living?

LA: My dad was a livestock dealer; my mother was just a housekeeper. She looked after the house, basically. He was a livestock dealer, bought pigs from the farmers and sold them at the sales in Stratford, Ontario and different places. That's where he made the profit. And he owned and raised horses.

Q: So, he made a pretty good living then.

LA: Yes, an average living.

Q: What education did you get?

LA: Three years on grade 9. First year, I went I went three quarters of the way, second time I went four years; then I said that's enough. I ran away from home and went to work for E.P. Taylor in Brantford, Ontario. I was running away, and that's where I went and hid until they caught me. I worked for E. P. Taylor for all the time until I got caught. I worked in the artificial breeding area. We used to go in the barn and the guy would do the artificial insemination stuff, and we'd keep everything in the fridge and stuff like that.

Q: What brought you to Alberta?

LA: Just to run away from home. There was lots of work out here and from down east when you're only 16 years old, there's cowboys and Indians and everything else out here. It was kind of like the old west, which is really what I wanted to see. Everybody said, if you go west go to the Calgary Stampede. So, I did in 1963 when I did come out here, and I shook hands with Tonto. I was pretty proud of that, and that kind of made me want to stay. Jay Silverheels was really from Toronto, Ontario.

Q: What was your first job in Alberta?

LA: I went to the Chateau Lacombe. We had a bet on who could get a job first. We all bet a gallon of the cheapest wine you could buy then. So I went to the Chateau Lacombe and I asked them if I could get a job. He said, oh yes we're hiring. So they hired me. He said, have you ever tied rebar before? I said, yes I done lots of that. So they put me on for the rest of the afternoon there and he said, bring yourself a pair of pliers tomorrow. So I just thought, well an ordinary pair of pliers is all I need. So I brought an old backyard pair of pliers. That's not what you use; you use Klein's. So anyways, I got going there and I stayed there for about three weeks and then they started laying off, and of course I was lower on the totem pole. But now I have experience. So I moved from there over to the CN Tower.

Q: What's in your hand, Larry?

LA: This is our safety hook on the CN Tower. This we used to hook in our belt, and we'd hang off the pilasters at the back. You'd just hook this on and lean back like this, and the cranes were behind you. We had safety belts, but in those days a safety belt had to go around the pilaster. So, you'd pretty well have to have another person over there to hand you the belt back to hook it over here. It was just a belt going straight around your waist and there was a hook on this side and a hook on this side and just a rope that went around. It wasn't a harness like they have today. But this was way easier and way quicker; so everybody used this. It was easy to make. You could make it in five minutes right on the site. You'd just open up your belt, put it in there, and away you go. All these guys hung on it, I'm sure.

Any place where we tied steel, we used these. They caught us on the CN Tower on the last two floors. They caught us and were going to shut the job down. They did shut it down for half a day or so and we all promised we'd wear them. But when we got back there it was chaotic. We were having problems hooking them up and stuff like that. That was more dangerous because you were holding on with one hand and trying to feed this around with the other. You just couldn't make it. It was getting tangled in the wire; so everybody went back to this. So then they did shut us down. We couldn't work if we didn't wear the right safety belts. So that was pretty well the end of it.

Q: So the safety precautions you took were better than what the employer was giving you.

Man (off Camera): I don't know if they were better, just more convenient.

LA: Quicker and easier to work with. Not as safe as the new ones were. At least you're going to hang around for a while if you had the rope there. But this one, if you're unhooked, you're gone.

HE: Well they had them ones that used to snap on with a chain. That didn't work either.

Man (off Camera): That came ten years later.

IB: You could take them off when you went up in the air and then you could put them back on when you hit the ground. It was the same thing with work boots, the ones with the steel toes. When they came out with the ones with steel toes, you could wear them on the ground; you had to wear them on the ground. But all the ironworkers all had soft toes because when you're climbing columns, you couldn't climb columns with these steel toes. It was more difficult. You could still climb, but it pinched your toes and everybody had sore feet after that.

TD: A lot of your balance was in your toes.

IB: You had to hook your feet in there and lock your foot in there so that you could climb the columns. Nowadays, they've got lifts and everything; it's fantastic. If we'd of had them in them days. . .

Q: Was that your first serious fulltime paid employment?

LA: In the west it was, yes.

Q: We covered some of the skills and abilities that you need to do your work. How did you learn them?

LA: Like I say, people in the place there, Chateau Lacombe, they taught me how to make the ties and stuff like that. After, when I went to the CN Tower double tying and stuff like that, well, I already knew all that stuff. The rest you kind of learn on the job.

Man (off Camera): That's when we showed you how to work.

LA: It was hard on the CN Tower. In them days, it was slave driving for \$1.65 an hour. That was top price. Not much, but it went a whole lot farther than it does today.

Q: Were you ever injured on the job?

LA: No, I've never been injured on the job.

Q: So we'll just move to Hugh. What was your first wage?

HE: Hugh Edgar is my name.

Q: Where were you born, Hugh?

HE: I was born in Lacombe, Alberta. I grew up down there until I was eight or nine years old, then we moved to the city, Edmonton.

Q: How did your family make a living?

HE: My dad worked on the oil rigs and my mom worked at a factory that made plastic bags - Northwest Polyrama.

Q: What education did you get?

HE: I got half of my grade 12; I got grade 6.

Q: What was your first job?

HE: I started working in a body shop and I worked there for the first three or four years. Then I was over at a friend's place, the Rebars, and they hired me on to work on the CN Tower. That would be in 1964. I worked there for a while and Paul Rebar got killed. After that I left, and came back later on towards the end of the job.

Q: Could you describe a normal workday?

HE: Well we'd start in the morning and you'd work your eight-hour shift, depending what you were doing. In the CN Tower either you're working on the slab or you're working on walls. The slab was the hardest one. We had to put the beams in and then the slab, and it usually took three or four days. It was hard work. There were 11 bars, 60 feet long. I was only 140 pounds and them bars were 300 pounds that we were carrying. So I had to work pretty hard. So I worked on that job and later on in 1967, I started my own business at Southgate Shopping Centre.

Q: What skills did you need to do your work, and how did you learn them?

HE: Well basically on the job, all on the job. I went to school down in Calgary; must've been '68, for ironworkers.

Q: Hugh, what significant changes have you seen throughout your working life?

HE: In steel? A lot. What we do now, it's just better equipment and better tools to work with.

Q: What were your significant activities outside the workplace?

HE: Oh I guess drinking; did a lot of that. Then I got married pretty young and raised a family. On the CN Tower I was up on the 18th floor the day the float was on. My wife was on the float. She was a beauty queen. She worked for a hairdressing salon and they had a float. I seen it from up in the air when they come down 100th Avenue.

Q: I'll move on to Ivan.

IB: Ivan (Kelly) Beauregard, which means good looking in French. It's hard to look in the mirror and see good looking.

Q: Where were you born?

IB: I was born in the Kikino Métis settlement. I was born like the little Lord Jesus; I was born in a barn. Mom fell off the rig pulled by horses and that's when I was born. They put me in the barn, and that's where I was born. That's where I was born, in Kikino. We used to go fishing and hunting. Dad made us little bow and arrows and we'd go hunt rabbits and stuff like that.

Q: Your home life was pretty happy?

IB: Yes, well there was quite a few of us. The first one up in the morning was the best one dressed, because there were 13 of us. It's a bugger going to school with your sister's dress on.

Q: What education did you get?

IB: I got grade 11. I got kind of thrown out by a teacher that I kind of beat up. I was a little bugger. We moved from Kikino to Edmonton back when I was just young. I think I was eight years old. Mom and dad weren't getting along too good. So mom left and we ended up in Edmonton. We had a pretty big house here. Mom was taking care of us. God knows how she could keep up with all the things for all the kids. We seemed to be getting along in Edmonton. We were right on the outskirts of Edmonton, which was about 30 or 40 blocks past Kikino.

Man (off Camera): Do you remember where the garden was?

IB: It was an old Chinese garden where I'd say we used to help ourselves to this Chinaman. A few times we got shot at but we still made 'er. If you've ever cleared a barbed wire fence with a sack of cucumbers on your back, and not far behind you was the Chinaman.

Q: Those were pretty tough times to grow up.

IB: Yes it was, especially with 13 of us. Mom was working hard just taking care of us.

Q: What was your first job?

IB: First job, I was working for Arctic Ice making ice. Nowadays it's all crushed ice and stuff like that for drinks and stuff like that. I worked at this ice company, for Arctic Ice I think it was. When I married my wife I was only 21. Her grandfather used to chop the ice out of the river and that's where those ice tongs came in. And he had another on his back. We were talking about all this and I told him I was an icemaker. Well I was the best guy for his granddaughter.

Q: That was your first job?

IB: That was my first job. That was quite a while ago. I ran away from home. I went down east with my sister. I was working on the highway, the No. 1 highway going to Thunder Bay, picking

rocks and raking all day in the hot sun. We were putting asphalt on this one highway. But I was kind of an ornery little bugger and didn't want to stick around too many places too long.

Man (off Camera): That's where your love of rocks come from.

IB: There you go. Speaking about the love of rocks, these guys used to fill my lunch kit every day with rocks. I'd take them home, but I didn't know I was taking them home. They just put them in there while I was gone away someplace.

Q: What significant changes have you seen in your workplace?

IB: The safety part of it, they never used to have - earmuffs and earplugs and stuff like that. Everybody used to carry a lot of cotton batten in your pocket for ear plugs. The hardhats were supposed to be supplied, but lots of time you'd find whatever you had in the lunchroom that they'd give you. There's a considerable amount of changes now that people don't know how to do the work the way we used to do it. We used to play with the angels every day, climbing and fighting and moving around having a good time. If you didn't have a good time there was no sense working.

Q: The ironworkers were pretty special because of your ability to scale those heights.

IB: Yes.

Q: That famous picture of the ironworker up on the beam having his lunch.

IB: Every ironworker I've seen always had that picture on the wall in their house or in the office or wherever you were working in them days.

Man (off Camera): Kelly used to goof off and just lay on the beam. A couple of times he had to go for a sleep up in the air

IB: As long as the boss didn't catch you, right Hughie?

Q: Were you involved in the union or any other organizations?

IB: I started working non-union then, back in '67 or '68 when I was working on my first job tying rebar for McCurdy Steel with this guy here. They were trying to get us to join the union in them days because it was a good thing. They took care of me for the rest of my life. I tied rebar and I tied all kinds of buildings, refineries, not far away from any of these guys here.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say about what you've done so far?

IB: I don't know. I haven't got much left. It's my birthday today, 70 years old.

Q: What was your starting wage?

IB: My starting wage was \$1.23, I think, but you could buy more with that in them days than you can with \$20 nowadays; probably get just as much in those days. And that's if you qualify for that \$1.23. Some of the companies tried to get you to work for 90 cents or something like that.

HE: Didn't McCurdy pay you 10 cents over the rate? I was getting \$2.40 an hour working for him.

IB: \$1.24 when we were in the yard fabricating and cutting iron, then shipping it out to the people. He was kind of a booster. We were called McCurdy's Indians. It was mostly Natives working for them, a couple of Black guys.

Man (off Camera): We had the Lone Ranger over there too.

Q: Did you feel that the union made a difference?

IB: They definitely made a difference because then we were fighting, but later on in life it didn't turn out too good. Now that you got older, your pension, you're building your pension all the time. Well I didn't have a pension until 1972. It built the pensions, but then it kind of took them away after, in this day and age. You were paying into it but you couldn't get nothing out of it once you retired. After you retired they'd give you this 500 hours that you could keep your pension going, and after 500 hours you had to shut it off. But then you didn't get no contributions to your pensions. So the pensions were smaller.

LA: You couldn't belong to the union when you owned your own company, right?

HE: Well there was a problem. We got that straightened out. But it cost me a lot of years.

LA: When I had my business I had to withdraw from the union. I couldn't take any pension or anything like that. I couldn't go on the jobsite to work. But I had to have all my guys from the union, and I was more or less out of the union all the time I had my business. So then they made me come to Edmonton and everything else and then they were going to blackball me from the union. Then all them years I could've been putting my pension in, and they never acknowledged it at all. I started in '72. I joined the union, and I wouldn't have even joined it but Wally Mikowski come down on the Safeway building there and there was an outdoor toilet. I saw him coming and ran into the toilet and sat in there. He came up and knocked on the door and said, Larry, I can stand out here a lot longer than you can sit in there. So I came outside.

Q: Was there anything else that happened in your work life that was significant?

IB: Just meeting all these guys. I kind of miss that. But I still volunteer, I can outdo some of the kids that are out there now.

Q: Hugh, my brother in every way, I'd like you to spell out your name.

HK: Hugh Kopp.

Q: Where were you born?

HK: Whitford, no not Whitford, Willingdon, just up the road five miles. I remember dad working at the Edmonton hog ranch and mom was a housecleaner. She cleaned houses for other people. I spent a year in the hospital when I was three to four. That's why they had to move to Edmonton. You had tuberculosis, Shirley had tuberculosis, and I had tuberculosis. I stayed in the hospital a full year. You guys were only in three months and six months or something like that. That's about all I can remember. Oh, and dad worked for the City of Edmonton. He was a gardener or landscaper. He worked taking care of their gardens and that.

Q: What was your early home life like?

HK: It was okay, young, growing up. There was a bunch of us kids and we all took care of each other. Kenny got me my first job, one of my older brothers, at Edmonton Gardens selling ice cream bars and potato chips. We made ten percent of what we sold; whatever we sold, we'd get ten percent. It was a tough go to make \$10, and that's the best anybody could make. You probably made about \$6 a night. Then I'd get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and go to the racetrack and let the horses onto the racetrack. I'd open the gate, they'd come out of the barns, and I'd have to look and make sure there was no other horses coming around, and let the horses onto the track to do their exercises, exercise thoroughbreds.

Q: That's when you were still in school?

HK: Oh yes, I was still in school. Grade 8 was my last grade and then I took some kind of educational training, pre-employment, that's what it was. I took that for two years. I used to really like Math. They said, well it's a two-year course, it's a two-year Math course, but we're going to combine it to one year. So you have to start coming in early in the morning and an extra half hour at lunch and an extra half hour after school. That's when I said, no I don't think so. I needed some time to myself. So then I quit. That was it.

Q: Where did you go from there?

HK: From there I followed my older brother around. I went to work at Rainbow Valley Saddle Club renting out horses. We worked on a couple ranches down south, Smith's.

Q: How did you get the job working with steel?

HK: From Dennis, like I said. I followed him around. He started working for McCurdy Steel and got me a job at McCurdy Steel cutting and bending iron and rebar. I was there three days and

old McCurdy said, you know how to drive that truck? I said, yes. He said, well okay I'll give you a pull and we're going to boost it, a pull start. I said, okay. I knew how to drive trucks. So we pulled in and got it started and he says, can you drive it around to where they're loading steel? I said, yes. So I drove it around but forgot about the trailer on behind and I wiped out the gas shed, took the corner out of it. Old Mack was pretty mad. I said, don't fire me Mack, I need this job; I'll come in on the weekend and I'll repair that gas shed. He said, well okay. I said, I'll fix it, I need the job. We stayed on about three years cutting and bending rebar. Then Luke Agoosis, he was one of the foremen out in the field, he said, you'd better come out and work in the field. I went out there and one of the union guys come out there and said, you're gonna join the union. I said, I guess I am.

Man (off Camera): We worked with Bill there for about three or four years.

HK: Yes, after that Denis, I don't know where you went after that. Out in the field, and I followed Bill around, Bill Daniels. We worked together lots. I used to like working with him in the wintertime because he had really warm hands and I'd trade him gloves every half an hour. My hands were freezing. He'd give me his warm gloves and I'd give him my cold gloves.

Q: What were your activities outside the workplace?

HK: Riding the rodeos on the weekends, drinking whiskey. On the weekends that's all we did; just go from one amateur rodeo to the next one.

Man (off Camera): I used to go to the rodeo there at Speedway Park. We used to go down there with a case of beer.

Q: That time I saw you in the hospital I didn't recognize you, when a horse kicked you.

HK: I didn't look too good, but I look pretty good now.

Q: Did you do any other activities?

HK: Not really, just rodeo and making babies. Made four daughters.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add to your story?

HK: Well I worked rebar for I can't remember how many years. One day I was tying rebar and I'm looking at these structural iron workers. They're standing there looking around. I said, how much do you guys make? They made a dollar more than me and they did less work. I said, I'm in the wrong business. So I dropped my rebar belt and switched over to structural steel. It's all the same union except rodmen worked twice as hard for less money. It shouldn't be.

LA: Lots of guys went from working rebar and then when there was no jobs for structural, you'd go back onto rebar. Roddy Brown was another one who went to structural.

HK: Rebar is hard on the back and structural is hard on the knees. In them days you were climbing steel.

Q: Anything else Hugh, and I'll move on to your brother.

HK: Not much.

DK: Denis Kopp. My middle name is Redhorse. Denis Redhorse Kopp.

Q: Where were you born?

DK: Willingdon, I think.

Q: Where did you grow up?

DK: At Whitford.

Q: How did your folks make a living?

DK: I think Cecil Littlechild told mom, send him up here. Remember? They sent me up there, and away I went. I worked in the kitchen, Uranium City.

Q: How did you get into the ironworkers?

DK: Well, there was a lot of steel.

Tom Daniels (off Camera): We brought him into the iron, myself and Bill Daniels. We all worked together. I think we started on the CN Tower.

Q: Denis, I want you to tell me that.

DK: Well I started working at McCurdy Steel making the steel. Then we went out to work.

Q: You were talking about when they didn't give you the proper....

DK: That was the CN Tower, ya. But Muriel, my memory is shot. I can remember a little bit at a time.

Q: What were your activities outside the workplace?

DK: Rodeo, pretty well rodeo and beer. Not too much beer, but...

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say in this interview?

DK: I can't remember. I don't know,

(Tom Daniels) off Camera): just cutting and bending during the week and then installing on the weekend.

Tom Daniels (off Camera): You were with McCurdy and then where did you go after?

Tom Daniels (off Camera): He switched over to structural. Denis and I were the first ones that went structural from rebar.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add, Denis?

DK: No I don't think so. I can't remember anything.

Q: How did you get the name Redhorse?

Tom Daniels (off Camera): He had a horse that was red.

DK: I forget how I got it, I took it.

Tom Daniels (off Camera): He changed it one time when he pulled the wool over our eyes so we couldn't find him. It was Denis Kopp and then Denis Redhorse.

TD: Homer asked me to say a piece for him. He said he's in the wrong meeting. He thought this was an AA meeting.

HD: My name's Homer Doucet.

Q: Where were you born, where did you grow up, and how did your folks make a living?

HD: I grew up in St. Paul, Alberta, 20 miles north of St. Paul, a little French community. My grandpa and dad and stuff had a mink farm; we did mink farming. Then when the minks started going down and my grandpa passed away, my dad went working for the school board in St. Paul. He worked for the school board in St. Paul for many years. Then we moved to Edmonton.

Q: So your growing up was pretty good?

HD: Yes, we had a full family, nine kids and my mom and dad. We lived on a farm in St. Paul, north of St. Paul, mixed farming. My mom stayed at home and raised the kids and did the farming, and my dad went out and worked for the school board.

Q: What kind of education did you get?

HD: I got grade 11 education. I did half of grade 12 and I quit. I went to work and tried to tie steel but it was too rough for me. But I still stayed there. I set up the forms for them to put their steel in. I did the carpentry work. I went to school and became a journeyman carpenter with a Red Seal ticket, and I stayed in construction and did lots of bridge work, set up lots of bridge work. That new bridge on the Yellowhead on 184th Street, did that one. Onoway, 43, Berrymoor, many places I've been to.

Q: What was your first job?

HD: My first job when I first got out of school, when I first started, I worked for AMA for about six months. I was going to be a claim adjuster for accidents but it wasn't my bag. I was used to being on the farm, being outside; office work wasn't for me. I wanted to do something I liked. So I tried rebar and it was just too tough on my back. I had back problems from playing hockey as a kid. So I had back problems and it was just too much. So I went into carpentry and set up the forms. I loved it; did it all my life. I did a little bit of fishing with Larry in my spare time.

Q: The fishing was pretty good in your area.

LA: Yes it was; yes it was. . . . In Lake Wabamun, 8 o'clock in the morning we set nets and by 12 noon we had to be off the lake. We pulled out two gravel trucks with snow racks on, full of whitefish, a three quarter ton full of jacks, and a three quarter ton full of suckers and stuff, lake cod. We cleared \$2000 and some in one day.

?: You know how they found out where the fish were in the wintertime? They used to trawl with a ski-doo.

Q: Homer, how did you gain the skills to do your work?

HD: I learned lots through my dad, my dad being a main man at the county for the school board division. He was a carpenter by trade too. He had went back to school as an older guy after the family was kind of... Then we moved to Edmonton and he went to the Medical Science Building. So I learned carpentry through him and went to school for it. I did my schooling in two years; it was a four-year program but I done it in two years.

Winston (off Camera): What was your pay back then?

HD: I think when I first started in construction, I was making about \$1.15 or \$1.20 an hour, in '67. I finished my school in two years. So then when I come back to work I had a big... The union helped us out lots because the company I worked for. I did the steel for the TV tower for serving engineer; I did that with Paul Basaraba. Then I went to Baffin Islands. I worked at the mines when they opened up the mines on Baffin Islands. I was there six months at a time. These kids have a rough time doing 21 days, but I was six months. My boy was five months old. When I come home he was 10-1/2 months old. But I bought a house at Alberta Beach and I'm still

there. I didn't have a mortgage; I didn't have nothing. I made enough money just working in Baffin Island. I'm still there.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Man (off Camera): Those were the days, the good old days.

Q: You struck it lucky by getting up north there.

HD: Yes, I was lucky, I was one of the few. I can tell you a few other things. I worked for Native Venture Capitals too. I did the store in Anzac where Larry comes from; I worked on the hotel in Anzac with Herb Belcourt and Mike Woodward. I built a store for Melvina and Joan, and I built Chipewyan Prairie Inn in Janvier. That used to be mine too, Chipewyan Prairie Inn.

Q: Now we'll move on to Tom.

TD: Tom Daniels, Sr. I was born in Alberta. What did my parents do? Is that where you were going to go next?

Q: I was going to ask you, where in Alberta?

TD: Daniels country, Elk Point. St. Paul. God's country.

Q: Where did you grow up? Did you stay in St. Paul?

TD: Pretty well, yes.

Q: What was your first home like?

TD: Very hectic, very hectic. We grew up with cattle, horses. So there was not much down time when you're 10, 12 years old. It was go, go, go. That's why I spent the last 60 years? You grew up that way.

Q: Were you brought up in a specific culture?

TD: No. I guess I'm pretty well not Native culture, because there was no brown people around where we lived, only us. So we had to go that way. I don't talk the Native language at all.

Q: What was your first job?

TD: My first job, in the summertime I used to hang around the bridge they were building. Finally the late Wally Richardson caught me there and said, would you like to work summer hours? I said, yes. Now I'm geared up to be an ironworker, that Camelback Bridge. Couldn't wait for school to get out, went flying down to the jobsite. I can see me walking the steel in the

water and picking up bolts from the sandbar. That was my being an apprentice on the summer job, picking up bolts. As time went on I ended up helping in different areas. Hands on is one of the best learning experiences you get, is hands on experience. I think all of us here had hands on experience to start with. Then he said to me, I want you to go across and throw some rivets. So I went across the creek of the Fort Saskatchewan River and went down there and he said, go find a fellow by the name of Snowball. He said, he'll show you how to do these things. So I'm walking around looking for this Snowball. I says, is there a Snowball here? This 200 pound 6'5" Black guy said, I'm Snowball. For an ironworker, when he gets a nickname, sometimes it doesn't match who you are but you got a nickname. He had me throwing rocks in the water there for about two days just learning. Then I ended up being on the bridge. Everybody's going for lunch and I couldn't stand up, I just sat there sliding my ass over these things. Everybody went for lunch and he come over and stepped over me and went for dinner. By the time I got to the other end they're coming back and stepped over me again. I turn around and slide my ass back to where I was. That was my first job as an iron guy. I was quite young. From there I went and ended up with Bill Pollock when he was in town. One day I decided, yes. I was at the CN Tower and Vic was there again. We started talking and he said, do you want a job? I said, yes, and that's where we all started at the CN Tower. That's where iron started. Then from there, as the years went on, I quit rebar and went to structural from there. That was long term. I spent years with ? bridge, 17 years with ? bridge. I was in Cambridge Bay, Baffin, Churchill and Uranium City.

Man (off Camera): Were you on the bridge in Fort Mac?

Man (off Camera): The bridge to nowhere.

TD: No in '64 I was still hanging around the CN Tower here.

Man (off Camera): I quit up there because it was too friggin cold. So I come down here and I went back on the CN Tower.

HE: I left and I come back.

Q: Were the wages on the CN Tower better than the other jobs?

LA: I don't think so. I think they were pretty well all the same.

TD: I think iron was about 20 cents more. When I started on the CN Tower, I was getting 98 cents an hour and by the time we got to level three it was \$1.23.

Man (off Camera): Rebar was lower than structural. Structural was getting higher.

TD: By the time we got half way up or maybe a tenth of the way up there, we ended up with \$5.25.

HD: That's the only good about the unions. The union brought our wages up. The unions were the people that brought our wages up. Otherwise we'd have been dirt poor. But the unions came in and that helped lots of people, us especially. Like for me going to work, I didn't have to tell them I was a Métis. With the union, you just went there. You had a number at the hall; you went there; that was it.

TD: That's one thing about unions-- they brought up the wages and conditions of work. But when we were there, Larry was right, he came west to see the Indians and cowboys. Well back in the '60s and '70s we were all still cowboys, still wild as hell.

Man (off Camera): Down east you go to Montreal and Quebec--they still think we ride horses here.

TD: That's how it was. Everybody on the CN Tower had other jobs.

Man (off Camera): Everybody rode horses. What's wrong with that?

Man (off Camera): No, but not steady. You had to do your work.

TD: Some company would maybe put a single mound of steel in a slab in eight hours. We would throw that thing in in five hours. Everybody just literally ran sometimes, like Rob Cardinal and all those guys. It was hard work but you worked your ass off because you're done at 4:30 and you'd go to the bar and have a beer.

HK: Remember the time you fired me?

Q: How many times were you fired, Hugh?

HK: Just once. The superintendent was doing, they were supposed to have the slab ready at 7 o'clock in the morning and I was there with my group – me and Bill and a bunch of other guys. Eight o'clock came and I said, look, we gotta get going here. They said, well we're not ready yet. Nine o'clock come and still not ready. I said, well man, my boss is going to get really mad with us just sitting around here. So he says, look, Saxony opens up at 9:30. Here's \$20. Go buy your boys a beer. Well, in them days a beer was only two bits a glass. So \$20 filled the whole table. So, after we got done with that \$20, somebody else threw another \$20 and another \$20, and 4 o'clock in the afternoon Tom come along. He said, you know, you're supposed to be tying that slab; Mack's pretty mad. I said, well,--the superintendent, his name was Mitts, he was a little Japanese guy--I said, he gave us \$20 to go have a beer and that's what we're doing. He says, well Mack's mad; you're all fired. So he fired me and I think Tom and his crew had to go tie the slab. The next week we were all back working.

TD: This is why we all got along. You worked your ass off, you drank together, and you got along. That's why I said today, the group that we were was like a butter plate. We watched each other's back. The pilasters, I can only describe it. On the CN Tower you see these pilasters up

there, and all they are is two bars sticking out on each floor. We all had to go in there and thread two bars on the inside and two bars on the outside, and wrap these stirrups on them going up. You're literally up in the middle of nowhere with a hook like that on your belt. You're pulling back on it, the hook comes off. We worked hard but you always had a date set aside for death. You didn't know when you were going to come down. You didn't know when you were going to fall. You lived with that. So, when you went to the bar, you had more fun because you made it as far as a whole day. A lot of our mates didn't make it - lots came down.

Q (Winston): I have a group of people here who identify themselves as Métis. . . . What does it mean to you to be Métis? Does it mean anything at all these days or when you were a worker? What did it mean to be a Métis ironworker? What did you encounter?

TD: Well Métis to me, I'm proud to be one because we're peoples who weren't in existence until nine months after the European invasion. We didn't belong here; we weren't here until nine months after the European invasion. Then our people were born. We are a distinct separate group of Aboriginal people we call Métis, and I'm very proud to be one. Our lifestyle is not much different than the mainstream Caucasian society. We adopted that. It's just who we are as Métis. I've never ran into anything I would call discrimination. To me, discrimination is you bring it on yourself. If you go out there and just be yourself, nobody discriminates against you, because you're part of society. There's a lot of people in the First Nations here who will practise reverse discrimination and they'll blame everybody for discriminating against them. But first of all, they started it. We as Métis don't go that route. We just live for today and tomorrow and the next day and just have a good time. I'm very proud to be a Métis. A lot of us have ancestral ties to 1885, Dumont and Riel. So we do have a lot of ties and a lot of history all the way from Manitoba. I'm very proud to be Métis. My grandfather was Scottish and I've inherited that; I'm a tight son of a bitch. But as far as being discriminated, no, never in my life have I run into problems of discrimination. You're open-minded, I'm very positive, so I just fit in anyplace I want to fit in. I never ran into it on the job, in school, my whole life, never.

HD: I have no problem, I've never had any problems, never. I learned to get along with everybody no matter what colour you are. We all have red blood. So it didn't matter what nationality. I grew up with Natives, I grew up with Ukrainians; Glendon, the next town over, was all Ukrainians; Germans, Lac la Biche Native. Never had no problem. We went to school, my best buddy. We had some good friends.

TD: Homer speaks fluent Ukrainian because he grew up in that environment. No problems at all. In fact I'm quite proud – my license plate says, proud to be Métis.

Q: But it didn't affect your employment?

TD: No, it's never affected my employment, never. In fact, we used to have people trying to get us away from McCurdy Steel. Other companies were trying to get us away from McCurdy Steel because of work ethic. We made more money for them. So no, it was no hassle being Métis. Proud to be one.

HK: When you sign onto a company it says, what's your nationality – Ukrainian, and it says Aboriginal or non-aboriginal or some say Métis. I always check off Métis. I never found any problem.

TD: I guess in being a Métis, we're all Métis here and I feel that we have the best of both worlds. We have the white world and we have the red world; we're in between there. We have the best of both worlds. My grandfather used to say, you have the best of both worlds, it can go either way.

HD: You don't have to like everybody and it don't hurt you to say good morning to them either. This stuff of fighting between yourselves, it don't have to be that way. We were taught even if I didn't like you, when I met him, I still said hi to him.

TD: I tried that. This guy dragged me off a bed away from his wife and I was smiling.

Q: Anything you'd like to add from your perspective?

DK: I'm not sure. I'm kind of slow. I find it right on to be a Métis. Mind you, people think I'm a white man. They don't know me. But I've got a good little farm and lots of animals coming into my farm. I got moose, deer, lots of wapus (rabbits). The moose are Métis.

Q: Kelly, do you have any comments?

IB: Nothing too much. When we first moved away from the Indian reserve we had a tough time being in a white school. We couldn't talk English. We talked Cree and French. We got a little bit of a hard time because kids are cruel.

Man (off Camera): Especially the English-language kids – that's a cruel language.

IB: If you didn't talk English you were kind of an outcast when you came there. But I was only young when I moved to Edmonton with mom. All the white kids used to give us a hard time because every spring mom would bring out the clippers and we'd look like skinheads. She used to shave us bald all the time and we'd really get a hard time, because none of the other kids would be shaved bald. But it saved her money. So that's the way she did it. Other than that, I've never had any kind of problems other than back young in the school days.

Man (off Camera): You'd get a job right away in a bowling alley, right?

IB: Oh yes. Otherwise I had no complaints. Nowadays it's getting a little bit worse, that if you make an effort to talk to somebody, some people won't talk to you at all. But other than that, I would say I never had any problem with racial aspects of life.

HE: I'm not Métis but I worked with them basically my whole life. I started my own business in '67 and that's all I had working for me; probably 99 percent of my people were Métis; still do. My son runs a business now and he still hires mostly all Native.

Q: What kind of business does he have?

HE: Reinforcing steel, rebar.

Q: Explain why you took that angle, why you chose to hire Métis.

HE: Well I don't know. They're better workers, good work ethic. That's just the way it turned out. That's who wanted to come to work for me. That's the way it's always been. I've hired a lot over the last 50 years.

LA: Well I come out here when I was 15 out west here, well 16 I guess. Back home, then, there was Black discrimination. They didn't have time to discriminate against us because we were just in amongst them. Where I was born, kids couldn't go to the restaurants, couldn't go to the barber shop. Little Lester used to come there and put his nose against the window and watch me get my hair cut. The guy would tell him to go out and move along and stuff like that. They were against the Blacks lots down there in Ontario. My grandfather and grandmother on my mother's side came from Cadillac, Michigan. So when we'd go over and visit them, that's all we got again was on the Black side. Where I was born we used to rent horses, which was maybe three miles from Uncle Tom's cabin, which was where Josiah Henson freed the slaves. So we never had no problems that way with any discrimination. When I came out here, of course, I hung around with all the Native guys and stuff like this, and when I started working and stuff like that, that's who I started with. That's how I got to know these guys and got my first job. When I first met my first wife, that's when I started finding a lot of discrimination. It was really way worse out here than it was down east about Native people, especially up around Ottawa and that it was getting bad because them guys were all just a little bit haywire. They'd do a lot of bad things and stuff like that. Mind you, they're doing some things for their rights and that too, but they're the ones that made the noise and got the discrimination going. In the west these guys out here seemed like there's no problem with them. They weren't argumentative but they were discriminated against job-wise. That's what I saw right away. They didn't want to hire. I'm a little fairer than most but my mother and grandmother are just about Black people. I've got pictures I can show you.

That's what I say. I didn't see no discrimination out here that I thought was bad. People going to work, we didn't have no problems with guys going to work here or nothing like that. So I didn't see nothing here opposed to what I saw back home in the 15 years I lived there going to school and stuff. In fact, one kid that I went to school with, there was two Als on our soccer team. I said, that's no good, you're white and you're black. I said, you're Puddin, we're gonna call you Puddin, cuz that's just a nickname type thing. The guy went through all school; he went all through. He was a town police first and then he went into the OPPs and today he's 74 and he's got Puddin written on the back of his license plate on his car. He's been called Puddin ever since.

I just hooked up with him here last year, went and saw him in Ontario. Now they're not discriminated down there as bad as they were. Things have changed lots. It's the same with the people coming over here. We're mad at these people coming over and stuff, but we gotta have a little madness about us now, discrimination, because we're just letting them in. I think we should be checking them over before we let them in. We were here, we worked for the country, we put our time in for the country; our old age pension is coming for us. There's not going to be any old age pension for that younger group, because of the people they're letting in and their families that's never put a cent into Canada.

HD: And being supported. And it's their goal when they're here, the same age as you. They retire at 65 years old just like we do. I worked here all my life and a person that immigrated to Canada here in the last 10 years gets more money from my pension because he's from out of the country. He gets \$350 a month more than I do. That's not fair.

Q: Hearing you, I'm struck with how different it is from the people that have treaty status and the problems that they encounter. They talk about the discrimination they encounter and their concerns about the fact that their children can't get jobs and all that. Why do you suppose that is?

TD: I worked with the government for a long time. You know I was with the government, eh? We started a project here about 15 years ago called the redesign of children's services. We talk about discrimination; a lot of it comes right from the reserves. They're about as biased as you can find in this country. Joe Courtepatte, myself, Wally Sinclair, surveyed the whole area and we had to go to Minster Cardinal at that time, our social services minister, we had to go to Minster Cardinal to give us letters that we could walk on the reserve and talk to these people. They didn't allow us on there because we were Métis. So when you look at discrimination you gotta look at the root of discrimination, and a lot of it exists right on land-based worksites.

HD: Yes it is. Both my kids are treaty Indians. My wife had the kids before we got married; so my kids are treaty. My boy runs the housing department at Enoch, and there's lots of discrimination. But I think it's brought onto them by themselves. Even my kids, my boy, I think we fight more about him being treaty and me being Métis than anything else, and we're father and son. He's got a totally different attitude than I have. He's got good work ethics; he's an engineer by trade. He went to school. He's a carpenter by trade with a Red Seal. He works for the housing at Enoch; he's been there for four years. But him and I can't go there to work unless we go work for a contractor that's working at the reserve. Then we can go work. But we can't go work for Enoch; we can't. I got a company; my boy runs the housing; so I'm able to go in there but I go there as a contractor. I can't go there by my personal name. I go there as a contractor, and then I have no problem. But I think they bring it onto themselves.

TD: We had steering committees. We had them in Buffalo Lake and all over the place. In fact, we won the award. Somebody went down to Sweden and got an award for the greatest amount of volunteers on one project. We were all proud of that award and self-government when we got the award. But having said that, if people will study what a person is, if you look at people

and make sure you know this person, both sides of him, you get rid of discrimination. A lot of discrimination comes in this country, be it Caucasian or First Nation, and I find a lot of it to be you can do this, you can do that, we can't do that. That seems to be the base of it. Because you're Métis you can't come on the reserve, and it starts. We had a big deal here in this boardroom. I brought in some First Nation people here and I picked from the government five of the best people you could find, unbiased people in here, because they're willing to help the model of child welfare on land-based worksites being on reserve, that we're going to work on this with them. Two days and there's five people left that are very biased against the First Nation people. Why? Because that came from the crowd to the stage that they were standing on. All I heard in the whole process was they, we, me and you, and that's the start of discrimination. This is for you guys, not us. So a lot of discrimination you find on land-based worksites on reserves is self-brought from small on, it's self-brought from small.

HD: I renovated the school there in '96 at Enoch and my boy in fact married a girl from Enoch because he met her there when we were working there. But I've seen that discrimination from little kids from two or three years old when I was working at the school. My dad would've never taught us to talk to women like that or to you; at three years old, tell you to f___ off. That would've never happened, but it's there. I saw it for a year and it was just terrible. It made my heart bleed for those kids, cuz they don't realize when they get older and at Enoch at that time they only had up to grade 8; so they've got to go to high school out of there. They have a new school now but at that time they had to go to high school, and that's why they can't fit in. That's why they have so much trouble when they go to high school.

TD: I started out as a parole officer. I became a parole officer after I got hurt and was in the University Hospital, bugged up my leg. Then I went to the government. From there I worked with every department there. My strong point is program development. So I did that all over the place. When we got called in to go to children's services for redesign, oh this is an easy thing, I'll travel all over the place and talk to the people on reserve. No, we had to have a letter so they'd let us on their land. You talk about discrimination; there's a lot of it there.

Q: They find problems that people won't hire them.

TD: Attitude. Remember a while ago I said I never ran into discrimination because of my attitude. You just go in and do it and everybody else does the same thing. It seems like they're waiting for somebody to say something so they can fly off their rocker. So that's how discrimination comes from there. I find more discrimination on reserves than I do anyplace in Alberta.

Q: Do any of you have anything to add to that?

LA: Well the Black people, any little problem comes up, oh it's discrimination, oh it's discrimination. The Native people on reserves--I know lots of them on all the reserves. My daughter-in-law works at Enoch. Yes, they all bring it upon themselves, same thing. If you say shut up to me, oh it's discrimination. Or the cops pick them up for something. The police at all

the reserves, I've got a police cam(radio) and I listen to it constantly. They're at every reserve. Up north I was at Anzac for 40 years, the same thing. At every reserve they're constantly going there; oh Fred took all my beer, took all my whiskey. It's constant. I don't know how they can actually find jobs to do anything else but sit on the reserve. People don't want to go to work that's on the reserves; there might be a handful and that's about it. The rest of them, they don't want to work. They're getting paid. The ones up in Anzac there, their places are paid for. They don't have to pay nothing – no lights, no nothing.

TD: We had a big meeting one time. Mike Cardinal was there, and we were talking about housing and how the hell, we call land-based worksites. They want child welfare and more money. We were spending above and beyond what the government can allow for children's services because Canada don't have a child welfare act; we gotta use the provincial ones. We were talking about discrimination and how they come about this, and Ralph Klein said, well how can we help them? I said, we can't, we gotta go to the core of the problem. When they open their mouth we go there and give them \$20; they open it again and we give them \$40. Pretty soon we're giving them \$100 and \$1,000 and the problem still exists. We as a society put them there. We let them do that. We as society have fed their discrimination against us, the outsiders.

Q: Thank you for honesty in answering this question.

TD: You talk to Muriel here, because one thing you don't do in this business you're in, you don't start the Métis on politics.

Q: What do you mean?

TD: The Métis are very political.

Q: I worked in the native employment program for years and I arranged to meet the chief McLean. And I said to him, we should work together. He said, oh no, we can't work together. If we aren't careful, we'll be as bad off as you are.

TD: That was the point of the letter. They wouldn't deal with us because they held themselves equally as Canadian government, not the Alberta government. So we're our own nation; we're the same as Canadian government. We had that permission to go out on the land.

Q: My belief is that the Métis had to work harder and be better than anyone else to survive. The difficulty was they didn't get hired. Mike Woodward wanted to get a job and they wouldn't hire him because they thought he was Indian, I guess. He went back and told them he was Mexican, and he got hired right away.

TD: We came in at a time when Alberta was in the high roll days – a lot of jobs, a lot of work, and bodies were needed, especially in rebar. They needed somebody that would work their butt off and run and do it. So we come in there, and the harder you worked, like Hugh said, you got a

raise. There was no such thing as an apprentice. The third or second year apprenticeship didn't come in until the early '70s.

Man (off Camera): Yes. '68, '69, '70.

TD: When was my boys working for you? '72, they worked for me in the '70s. Hughie, at that time you had first and second year programs, right?

HE: Well no really. It was there but we weren't too strict with it. First they'd come and do the job that you were doing, you'd get paid.

HD: The unions kind of made that change. The unions, first year you got so much, second year, third year, fourth year.

Q: The battery cut out.

HD: What was I talking about? Apprenticeships. Yes. When the unions came here, that's when the apprenticeship changed for us, even in the carpentry part and everything. At that time when I started working everybody got paid the same amount. If you were a carpenter it doesn't matter if you were a carpenter for one day or ten days; it didn't matter. But when the unions got there they said, okay now, we want people to get into the carpentry so we're going to have first year, second year, third year and fourth year, and that's how you got your pay. For me it was really good because I did two years in one. So I had a big increase in my pay when I came back. But not everybody could've done it. If you didn't have a little bit of help, it was hard to go to school for two months in those days. Then by the time you worked to go to school and then when you got to go to school they laid you off so you could get unemployment. But by the time I finished my schooling, my two years that I did back to back, I just got my employment the last week I was at school. So it was really tough; it was really tough for us.

Man (off Camera): When you went to SAIT, you weren't there that long were you?

HD: Yes. Well I went for that year.

HD: We could've done the same thing. They called it a project management course. But who could afford to go to school for a whole year back then? You've got your young family; you've got payments. I lived at Alberta Beach to drive back and forth. It was tough.

TD: Those were good days. It brings back a lot of memories. You could walk in the bar and put \$2 down and have 20 glasses of beer.

LA: In them days too, the union took and told all the contractors for every journeyman you could have two apprentices. When that first started, it went on like that for a long time. The government was paying the contractor for starting these programs. Then it just dropped like a sack of potatoes and now when we all started getting out of it they've got nobody to fill our

shoes, because they didn't have no training. That was the end of it, and they still haven't done that yet. Now steam engineers up north there, they need so many of those people they're putting them to school and the government's paying for them and everything for the fourth and third year. They go backwards up there on that instead of forward. Fourth and third year, you get a third year ticket; you got it in your pocket and you're just happy you're going for your second. Don't even bother going for your second and first because there ain't nobody out there that's going to pay you for that, because you're too high-priced. I can name 15 right now that went that far and can't go no farther because nobody's going to pay them.

HD: The contractors use that really well. Instead of putting you to school for the fourth year, a third year could do what a fourth year could do and it's only costing them \$10 an hour instead of paying us journeymen \$16. So we never got the job because the third year got the job.

Man (off Camera): It was government-funded too; they got money from the government.

Man (off Camera): Ya, they got the job; we didn't get the job.

HK: I checked the tape just about every day. I called the union hall and wanted to get a job. It's always first, second year apprentices they're looking for, a versatile welder, a welder that can do iron work. Well, that's not right. A welder should be a welder and that's it, not a versatile welder. They're thinking versatile. Well, they can do iron worker's work and you're taking apprentices, first and second year apprentices. If they're young and they can do as much as a journeyman, maybe they're not quite as smart. But they want them for the bull work.

TD: But go back when we first started. How many of us were welders? We all were. Same thing. We weld iron, rebar, we weld. We weld, we drove truck, we drove winch truck.

HK: But the harder we worked the more we got paid.

Man (off Camera): That's right, and the more jobs we had.

Man (off Camera): You didn't have to look for your second job. They would bring you with them.

HK: My boss used to say if I could beat him tying to the other end, he'd give me a nickel raise. So every Friday I'd beat him and I got a nickel raise.

TD: Remember that guy on the apartment for Edgar Rice that sawed the board on this side? Sitting on this two by four, cut it on that side. Some guy working, I forgot who it was.

Q (Don): Could one of you explain the difference between rebar and structural work?

HK: On rebar it goes inside concrete. You've got to tie the rebar and then you pour the concrete around it, which makes it strong. All the foundations and even when they're doing apartments,

it's all rebar. They do the slabs, the floors, it's all rebar. It all ties together and then it's held together with concrete. Structural steel is just steel beams. Each beam holds another beam together and it goes up.

TD: It's just a skeleton of the building. That's all we do is put up the steel. The other trades come in and put in the floor arms, the drywall. All we do is put up the steel skeleton.

Q: You mentioned that rebar does in your back and steel structuring does in your knees. Why is that?

IB: Because you're steady bent over all day; you're bent over tying rebar all day. On structural steel, you're climbing. Well nowadays they don't climb. But in them days if you couldn't get up there you didn't have a job. You had to climb the steel. You'd put your feet inside the columns and go all the way up; shimmy all the way up to the top. They used to call us monkeys because we could get up there so fast and never have to worry. Coming down, some guys come down upside down. Some guys, standing on top a column and playing. Nowadays you do that, your ass is grass man. You're off, because you're putting yourself in jeopardy. But them days, we were all in jeopardy. We never had the safety and the coordination that we have. Too many people have fallen since they brought in all this safety. Lots of times I just about died because I had myself tied off with this new gadget that was called a lanyard. Some of them are eight foot. But you're walking out and you're not used to this stuff. When you come to the end of that rope, it jerks you backwards because it's a tension and the nylon absorbs the impact if you do fall. But rebar is simple. We had hooks around our belts, same as he's got there, and we used to climb the rebar and start building it from the bottom and then all the way to the top. Then we'd bend bars so when they put a cue deck in and the slabs. Then you had to thread the rebar through it and then tie it. You're bent over all day tying this rebar, but there's special ways to do it. They have all different – 50-50, 25 percent or whatever, where the rebar crosses like that.

HK: Were you there the time he was bent over tying rebar and I took a hook and put it in his belt and he was dangling?

IB: They lifted me off the steel with the crane.

HK: He couldn't see me; he was bent down tying rebar. I just took the crane and I hooked into his belt and picked him up off the ground. Then we all went for coffee.

IB: Structural is just a skeleton until they put in the cue deck and weld it all down. Then you go in with the rebar.

HK: We had a lot more fun.

IB: Nobody wanted to go and do rebar after all of us older people went to structural. They couldn't get nobody to come and do rebar because nobody had the initiative to go, to work hard like we used to.

LA: When we were young, we were big and tough and all this stuff. But then as you get older you get a little smarter. That's too tough to do, but I can do that over there. I went rigging and I really loved rigging. I have a couple of cranes on my train set at home. First thing I put up was a structural piece, and the cranes are hooked there and the guys were signalling the crane up there and everything.

TD: When we first started we were all gung-ho. We were gonna do this; we were fast.

HK: The faster you were, the more you got paid.

TD: One of our hobbies was go to the bar and get in a fight.

Man (off Camera): That was the good old days. Today you're in jail.

LA: We used to think we were so tough. We'd walk into a hotel and take a salt shaker and throw it. The two of us sitting there, Henry Fleming and myself. Henry was a golden champion for Alberta and then he went for Canada. But anyways, the two of us would sit there and throw a salt shaker to five guys sitting over there. Larry, why are you throwing that salt shaker? Now the fight's on.

TD: Herman would sit there and take a draft beer and chuck it over the back. Shuffleboard was the going thing. We'd come in the bar and these guys were playing. He'd walk by and steal their rock and go sit down, just so he'd get in a fight.

LA: We were in Williams Lake and Jim Regard was there. When we walked in there, this guy was sitting there drinking a bottle of whiskey right out of the bottle, just drinking it like this sitting on the table. Geez this is funny, this new bar like this; people bring their own whiskey. Oh no, he can; you guys can't. So anyways, we wondered why. So this guy, he was twisting guys' wrists and stuff like this. Jim's pretty tough; so we thought, well we'll sic Jim on him. So Jim, go arm wrestle that guy. So Jim sat around for a while and everything else, and this guy is just beating these guys and just hammering their fists and everything. So Jim, kind of the more drinks he got, he thought he'd try. So Jim went over and goes up to this guy, and the guy just knocked old Jim's wrist right down. He said, I'm gonna try him one more time and if he does that I'm gonna pop him. There's two guys sitting behind us; they were Americans. They were up hunting and they got lost out in the bush. So they talked this guy, the tough guy, and he was telling Jim, he says, you'd better watch that guy. He says, we were lost; we were out in the bush and everything else. This guy had a great big saw with blades on about this long. He just held it up there and pointed it around and says, well you go down here two miles and you go over here three miles, with one hand pointing it. Jim said, that's it. Some of the things! I think we had a lot of fun in our lives.

HD: That's the rough time I had working with the Indians, a teepee flop.

Man (off Camera): After 45 years it don't matter.

TD: To sit down and talk, it brings back what we used to do and how hard we worked. But at that time we didn't think we were working that hard. It was a job that had to be done.

HD: We worked hard so we could play hard.

TD: That's right. But you never thought, I'm working too hard. It's something you had to go in in the morning. You were there, you get geared up, you do it, and you go home. Or you go to the bar and then you go home.

Man (off Camera): You could play with the boys. You could go to work with the boys.

Q: You mentioned you've lost a lot of people over the years as well.

TD: There's people we lost that were closely connected to us sitting here.

HE: Paul got killed. Yes. At the CN, right at the beginning.

TD: Billy, his brother, got killed on the bridge in Fort Vermillion. Vic got killed in Vancouver doing the same thing. All of us know somebody that got killed, somebody we worked with. It was a sad day sometimes. We lost 12 ironworkers in one year, 12 ironworkers in one year. So, like I said, we were up there running around beams with the angels and we flirted with death. You didn't know, maybe death's coming to get you today. But that didn't hinder you in anything, you just kept working because you knew you were going to meet the rest of the boys in the bar after work.

LA: Quite a few guys too retired at 60 years old or earlier and then went back to work after and that was their demise, going back.

Man (off Camera): Billy Harte who was retired doing that job, a 74 year old and he was my connector.

HK: Don Bailey, he worked all his life at structural and he retired. He was sitting around Lamont and PCL's yard he was working at. He said, the only way they're going to get me off this job is carry me off. One morning there he was, he was in the sea can doing bolts or something, putting on his equipment.

IB: That's where they found him, sitting in the sea can. Had a heart attack and that was the end of him.

HK: But he lived a good life.

Man (off Camera): He said, I'm not walking off, they're gonna carry me. And that's what happened, they carried him.

IB: Don Bailey was from Nova Scotia but he liked to be called Newfie because he liked the sound of that. He wasn't a Newfoundlander but we called him Newfie and he liked that.

Q: I'd like to go around the circle and get some closing comments.

LA: I think I made a fair living at ironworking. I enjoyed it. The better part was the rigging, I think, than the rebar. Rebar was a little harsh when we first started. As I got older I started thinking about--my back started giving out and stuff, and then I went structural and then my knees gave out. So then I thought, well I'd better go rigging. So I took up rigging.

LA: I made a good living. I had to move out of Edmonton because I knew too many people. I went up to Anzac and spent 40 years up there. I went to all the plants and worked pretty well at all of them. Met a lot of really nice people and had a lot of fun.

Man (off Camera): Anzac is more or less a Métis settlement and that's where my wife comes from.

Man (off Camera): Larry told his wife, get ready, we'll get the next stage out of town.

Q: I think we'd better have you name yourself when you start to speak. That was Larry.

HE: I guess rebar was good to me but I've been retired now for 22 years. So I've just been taking her easy and playing with the grandchildren.

Q: What did you think of what happened today?

HE: I thought it was real good. It was interesting to sit here and talk about the past like that.

IB: I think this is a good thing that you can get to see everybody. All these guys. I haven't seen some of them for 15 or 18 years, and it's good to see all the people that you kicked ass with. A good thing about it is that these guys are still here.

HK: Same thing. It's good to see these old brothers and comrades that we worked together with. It brings back lots of memories. I think we should somehow get together again, have a reunion now and again, and see if we can get a few more brothers in here.

Q: Is there any women in steel?

Man (off Camera): Oh yes, there is now. How many years--not that long. In structural more than rebar. . . .

HK: I was telling you about June. She's got seven kids, and three boys are in structural and one of her girls is in structural, I think. June, she's a welding coordinator in our union hall, or she was.

TD: I met a woman structural in Fort McMurray. She started out as a packer driver and ironworker welder...

HK: First time I met her she was at Scotsford Impacting.

TD: Very few though, very few.

HK: I really enjoyed getting together.

DK: Well I lost a lot of my brain and I don't talk too much anymore. That's all.

HD: My name's Homer Doucet. I think this is great. We need the brothers and it's going to be hard to replace us. They're trying to but there'll never be that day.

TD (off Camera): One of these days they'll find us in a riverbank in Drumheller.

TD: I think it was great reminiscing. It brought back a lot of good memories and some sad memories of brothers we've lost that are not here with us today. As far as the whole project gone into film and going to the archives wherever you're taking it, it's good for people to know. When you look at Edmonton you see all these high-rises and tall buildings. It's good for them to know who was there from the start – and that was us.

LA: The CN Tower was the tallest building in Western Canada. At the time, it was supposed to be built in a three-year period but it was finished a two-year period. It was started in '64 and finished in '66.

Man (off Camera): That's probably because of the rebar.

LA: And the crew that they had. Hashman Construction was the general contractor on it. We hustled our butts to get her done, and it was a fine job when it was finished.

HE: It takes eight hours to put a ton in. On that job they probably did it in about three hours a ton.

HK: McCurdy Steel built the Groat Road Bridge twice with the rebar in it. The first time they were just about completed and there was a logjam up river that took out the bridge. So they had to do it again.

TD: Going back to what Hughie just said there about the rebar: I remember times at the CN Tower where they had to increase the yard crew and bring more people because the yard could not keep up with the people in the field. That's how fast we were putting the steel in.

Muriel: I was on the apprenticeship board when we were trying to get them to change their ways, because they did make it very tough for the young guys trying to make it through the year. I wrote a letter to Premier Lougheed and I said, either give us the vote on the apprenticeship board or don't appoint us! I was one of the two women on the apprenticeship board representing the public. My argument was, if there's public money going into the training then there should be a representative of the public to oversee this. But they didn't do it and I wouldn't accept another term after serving two terms. But it was really interesting because it was a breakthrough when we were allowed into boardrooms and committees. Of course the argument they used was it was for unions and the owners. So they figured that if they put us on the board without a vote we would be satisfied. Mind you, that didn't stop me. But it was pretty awful.

IB: They have a situation for women now but most of the women are mostly welders. They don't get out and do the heavy work. But I have seen some of the women out there, they hold their own to some of the guys. There are some tough women out there, and they're hard workers.

[END]