

Carl O. Wilson

July 10, 2023, Edmonton Interviewer Donna Coombs-Montrose, Camera Don Bouzek

CW: I'm originally from Jamaica. I left Jamaica June 1960 to join my parents in London, England. I lived in England from 1960 to 1974. When I went to England I was only 17, because I left straight from school. I went to school in Kingston, Jamaica. I left school and spent six months in Jamaica before I emigrated to London to join my parents. I flew into London, if I remember right, June 20, 1960. When I reached London it was a very unique experience because I was still in my teens, and I didn't want to stay in England; I wanted to go back home. But I had no choice than to stay, because I'm joining my parents. I worked in factories for a while and at the post office as a sorter. I sorted letters in the post office for about two years; then I left the post office. When I came out of the post office a friend of mine, his name is Teddy Walker, he introduced me into the welding trade. He says to me, why don't you come and work with me as a, well in Canada it would be an apprentice, but in England it's called a mate, a pipefitter's welder's mate. So I worked with various companies as a fitter's and welder's mate until I started learning to weld myself. I learned the trade and as I got better I was able to challenge the pipe welding test. After several attempts, I was able to pass the test as in England they call it pressure welder. I was just a pipe welder. So I worked in the trade for a few years. England is very highly populated. To be competitive in the trade was very hard. You gotta travel out and go to various places like Wales and other counties; you had to travel to other counties. I worked at Lincolnshire, I worked in Liverpool, I worked in Wales. Various companies in England, you work for the construction industry, like Foster Wheeler I think was one of the companies I worked for in the construction industry. Eventually work got very tight because we had things in England called the three-day working week where you get electricity for three days, and three days you only got electricity for a certain amount of time. A lot of electricity came from power plants, coal-fired plants. So I decided I had to leave England. I went to Holland and worked for ten weeks as a tank welder working vessels. I worked for ten weeks and more or less was able to save my fare to come to Canada. My wife had a cousin living in Thompson, Manitoba, of all places. Thompson is in the same latitude as Fort McMurray and it's very cold. I came to Canada September 1974 and I was in Thompson, Manitoba for two months before my wife and kids joined me in Thompson. My wife's name is Yvonne Wilson, and I had three kids at the time.

When I came to Canada they were seven, five, and four. At the present moment they're full-grown people, adults with their own family. My eldest son still lives in Edmonton. My second son lives in Ladner, B.C. My daughter lives in Washington. A lot of people say Seattle, but she lives in Bothell, Washington. So they're out of the place. My oldest son, his name is Ray Wilson. He's an Edmonton police officer. At the present moment he's a detective, Detective Ray Wilson. He's the only one living in Edmonton with a family. He's got two boys. One plays hockey; his name is Caltrain Wilson. He's going down to Philadelphia sometime later this year to play for the farm team of Philadelphia. As said, the other two, Maxine lives in Bothell, Washington and Garfield lives in Ladner, B.C.

Q: In 1974 you moved from Manitoba to Edmonton?

CW: 1974 I came to Canada, but '75 I came to Edmonton. I relocated from Thompson, Manitoba to Edmonton. When I relocated I came straight here to work in Fort McMurray. I took a welding test for Horton Steel with a boilermaker company, Chicago Bridge Art and Steel. They work on vessels and tanks and humongous things like coker. I came from Thompson to Edmonton to work for Horton Steel as a boilermaker welder. When I came from England I had a boilermakers card. But when I found out how hard a boilermaker works I said, no I'm not going to join the boilermakers, I'm going to join the Pipefitters Union. So I decided to join the Pipefitters Union, because I was a pressure welder.

Q: What's the difference?

CW: Between the boilermakers and the pipefitters? For a welder, the difference is the pipefitters hire mostly pressure welders. They have to be able to pass a pipe welding test. Boilermakers employ journeyman welders and B welders. Journeyman welders mostly can weld plate, and pipe welders weld pipe. You have to be qualified to pass a pressure test, which they call a B test in Alberta, the B pressure welding test. When I worked in Fort McMurray for Horton Steel, I worked for them for two or three months and I worked on the coker. It was built in sections because it's about an inch and a quarter thick and it's stainless steel clad. You had to weld and you had to gouge, and I didn't like the gouging because it was a lot of sparks flying all

over the place and you get burnt. When I left Horton Steel I came to Edmonton for two reasons. It was very cold in Fort McMurray that year when I came here in '75 into '76. I came back to Edmonton and worked in a shop in Edmonton for a couple months. Then I decided to join Bechtel out in their yard that they were building; we call them modules. They build modules that they ship up to Fort McMurray on trucks to go in the plant. I went down to the pipefitters hall and pulled a slip and went out as a permit. When you more or less start with the union you get in as a permit member before you can become a full fledged member. I joined Local 488, the Plumbers and Pipefitters union. It's called UA Local 488, United Association.

Q: So the permit member then has to graduate?

CW: When you're a permit member you are more or less-you serve a time as a permit before you're initiated to become a full-fledged member. I was a permit member in 1976 and I got initiated the same year in June and I became a full-fledged member of the union. It seems like everything happened in June.

Q: Does the union have its own apprenticeship system?

CW: The union has apprentices, yeah.

Q: Is the permit member like an apprenticeship?

CW: The permit welder, you are a full-fledged welder when you more or less approach the union to join. But apprentices are more or less people who are getting into the trade and they're getting a first year. They do a certain amount of hours in the trade working and then they go to school, like a trade school, for about two months. You move from first year, and once you pass your exams and go to school you become a second year, and so on. So you become a second year, a third year, and then you more or less become a journeyman. When you're a journeyman in the industry, that means you are more or less full indentured; you're a tradesperson. When you're a journeyman you're either a journeyman pipefitter or you're a journeyman welder. When you're a journeyman welder in our trade, you get a first class

journeyman ticket, and that's TIGing on plates, not TIGing on pipe. It's TIGing on plates but it's still pressure, because it's got to be bent. You pass your first-class journeyman and that ticket is for life. The B pressure ticket is only more or less good for two years, and you've got to renew it every so often. Every two years you've got to renew your pressure ticket. You have your B pressure ticket and whenever it comes up for renewal you've got to renew it; let's say two weeks before or whatever.

Q: Does the union renew it?

CW: Union renews it and you can renew it yourself. When the union renews it, you go to various shops to renew a ticket. When you take your B pressure ticket initially, you've got to do a theoretical exam as well as a practical. Every one of these tickets you have to do a theoretical part of that exam as well as a practical. When I became a member of the Pipefitters Union, I worked in the industry for years in different sites. A lot of the jobs I did were in Fort McMurray at Syncrude, because Syncrude was more or less the plant that was being built, and at the present moment Syncrude is probably the biggest, I don't know if I can call it a refinery, because it's not really a refinery as such. They do the crude, and the crude comes down to Edmonton to be refined and sometimes it goes to different parts of the world to be refined. It might go to New Brunswick in pipelines and stuff like that. In the oilsands the oil is being extracted and the crude is being extracted from the sands. It goes through the tumblers in the coker and when it's being taken out of the sand it's like tar. It's thick and it needs lots more processing before it's been perfected.

Q: So the tumblers and coker are processes?

CW: They are processes. In other words, the sand goes through the tumblers, which is the coker, and it goes thorough a certain temperature. The tar is being extracted from the sand, and then the sand is being put back into Fort McMurray somewhere. In Fort McMurray you've got things like the tailing ponds and all that, because those are where you have a lot of the oil and it's got lots of byproducts. You've got sulphur that comes off the oilsands and you've got lots of other minerals. In Fort McMurray at Suncor and Syncrude, those are processing plants. That's

why I said they're not really refineries – they're processing plants. They extract the crude from the sand and then it's being transported in pipelines to come down. Because it's still liquified, the sand, because they've got it where it's liquified and can go to places like, there's a big tank farm in eastern Alberta, I forget the name of the place, but that's where most of the tanks are. They store the oil and they've even got it in places like you'll drive along Baseline Road in Sherwood Park and you'll see all these massive tanks. Those tanks have different products in them. Some of them might have the crude and some might even have the oil that they process. Those are refineries, places like where you have Refinery Row. Those are really refineries in Alberta. But big other refineries are down in the States and Eastern Canada, like Urban Refinery and all those places. So that is how my trade works in this industry--I was a B pressure welder. I worked my way up in the Pipefitters Union that I was very, I must say, I'm a bit of a no-nonsense person. In the industry they'll say, I don't take shit from people. I'm very outspoken. On the jobs you'll get sometimes we call it harassed or you might get a foreman who's riding your back. I don't take kindly to those things. If you're lippy, as we call it, you find yourself high on the layoff list. I'm always being laid off and come home. My wife says to me, how come you're always the first one off the job? I said, I don't know. But I know why, because I'm not somebody who takes kindly to... I know I am a good tradesperson, so don't come and give me, as we call it on the job, give me shit, when I don't deserve shit.

Q: Was this racial?

CW: At times it is. We say in Alberta racism is subtle. You know directly when somebody has a little bit of racial tendency in them. You use a lot of diplomacy and tact on the job. Eventually I got to be job steward. I'll just let you know what a job steward is. A job steward is just like you'd have in the union; you'd have officers. We are just below the business agent, because he appoints us to more or less look after the men, look after their interests. When you're a job steward, you take their complaints and take it to the upper echelon of the company and also report it back to the union. In the union we have union officers. You have business agent and you have business manager. The business agents are the ones who go on the job and they look after the interests of the men. Do you understand what I'm trying to say, Donna?

Q: Does anybody look after the women?

CW: Well they look after the men and the women. For a long while, Donna, when I just came to Alberta, you didn't have women in the trades. Eventually you had women starting to get into the trades, because women more or less became tradespersons and then became teamsters because they can drive the vehicles. Teamsters is a union that operates driving the vehicles all over the site. You have the teamsters and you have the operators. The operators and the teamsters are very much intertwined. As an operator you operate the big cranes and the machinery. As a teamster you drive the vehicles. So that's the difference between an operator and a teamster. Women are also labourers on the job. When they're labourers, they'll clean out the lunchrooms and more or less like when you're in camps there'll be what are called cooks but they're really janitors. In the camp you'll have the union that looks after the cooks. What is that union again?

Q: CUPE?

CW: No, there's a name for them. It's Local 47, that is in the construction industry. The CUPE is in Edmonton that looks after these workers in Edmonton, but out in the field we have a union that looks after the cooks and the people that look after the meals. So they belong to that union. I can't remember the name of the union right now. But anyway, I worked right up until I was a job steward, and I was a very good job steward because we have things like camp committee meetings where you more or less used to look after the meals that were being served. You have a lot of times that the men are not happy with the meals, and they complain. So you more or less gotta have camp committee meeting. The camp committee meeting will be between the union and the contractor and the job stewards. We will look after the interests of the men on the job, because you gotta keep the men happy. If they're not happy, then they will rebel and you might have wobbles and things like that. You know what's a wobble?

Q: No.

CW: A wobble is when the men are disgruntled and they walk off the job. They call it a wobble. It's a low grade of strike when you wobble. You walk off the job because you're not happy. Then you have to have the union rep come up there and they will meet with the contractor and the client. The client is the owner. This is how they settle their differences. After I was a job steward for a while I eventually got, how should I put it now? I'm very ambitious and I think I was good enough to be a representative in my union. So I ran for office and I was successful in 2000; I got elected as a business agent. If I might say, at the present moment I'm the first elected person in Local 488 as a Black man.

Q: You're the first Black business agent?

CW: Yeah, elected. There was only one other Black business agent in the industry that I know of, and he was elected; he was appointed. His name is Oliver Leptz. He lives in Mill Woods. He was more or less an operator and he was appointed as a business agent. I worked with him up at Syncrude as an operator. He was a very good operator....

Q: I know his brother. His brother died.

CW: Yeah, Oliver was a big guy and he lives in Mill Woods. Oliver may not be around anymore because I haven't spoken to him for years, but I think he's still alive. He lived in Mill Woods. He was a business agent for the Operators Union. But I was elected, and I was elected on three different occasions. I was elected in '99 and I served from 2000 to 2003. I was elected again in 2002 and I was elected in 2006. In 2008 I didn't get re-elected. So I got three terms out of the Pipefitters Union as an elected officer, a business agent. As a business agent, you represent the men.

Q: So you and Desmond had union positions?

CW: Yeah, but Desmond was below me. He was a job steward. There's a difference between a job steward and a business agent. A business agent is elected and you're paid as an officer and you travel around various jobsites, because you might have different jobsites to look after the

men. You might have probably four jobsites in Fort McMurray, and if you're in town you might have four jobsites in town. You get a vehicle to drive around, and you travel around and go to various jobsites. You get permission from the client to go on the site. You gotta get permission from the client to go on the site. You go in the lunchrooms and you visit the men, and you go in the offices and visit the contractor. That's your role as a business agent.

Q: Were you stationed in Edmonton?

CW: Yeah, I was stationed in the office. You work out of the office as an agent. You'll have different areas as an agent. You'll probably have Fort McMurray; you'll probably have. . .

Q: Aurora?

CW: Aurora is a bit further than Syncrude. Most of those jobs were camp jobs. They have different camps that the men were stationed into. At Syncrude they had a camp on the jobsite, and right now it's not on the jobsite anymore; they've moved it to outside of the jobsite on a different part of the land where they have Millennium. When I was up at Suncor they usually had the camp right inside the plant. I remember they used to call it the Hilton, because that was the best camp built up there for a while. Those were single rooms, and you have you own room and bathroom. But for a long while it was bunkhouses, these camps, where you have a series of rooms and it goes like you have a single room, single room, single room. You have the bathroom and the toilet everybody used. But when they built in Suncor what they called the Hilton or the camp, it was individual rooms and individual bathrooms. You didn't share with no one. Right now that is the pattern that they're trying to build camps now. They've upgraded the camps that they're trying to make it a little bit more progressive for the men and women that they have their own dorm. You have your own room and your own bathroom, your own toilet. You go into the kitchen and have your meals just the same. They have a big area where you go and get your meals, sit at the table and have your meals. At one time when I was up in Syncrude you usually go back to camp for your lunch, but now they have more or less found out that if you give the men a bag lunch you get more production instead of them going back to camp. When they go back to camp you waste time. So when you get a bag lunch, there's an area where you

pack your lunch and there's things you put in a bag or in a lunchpail and carry it to the jobsite. Now you have big lunchrooms on the site. Where you'd have refrigerator or coolers, you'd have microwaves so you can warm up your lunch. Right now in town that's the same thing you do. You work at places like Petro-Can and Esso oil refinery, and you get a big lunchroom, a massive lunchroom, where you have refrigerators and you have microwaves. You have lots of microwaves because you only get half an hour for lunch and you've got to use a microwave and have your lunch. By the time you're finished it's about 40 minutes, because you get walking time and you get time to clean up and go to the lunchroom and have your lunch.

Q: So you get more than half an hour?

CW: Sometimes they're a little bit flexible, because you can't be too rigid with the workers. When they leave the jobsite, they give them time to go wash up their hands and give them time to more or less put away their stuff and come back out on the jobsite. You gotta be flexible. You do the same thing at quitting time too, where you give them, let's say you're finishing at 5:30, they would more or less, about quarter past, they would pack their tools away and go wash their hands and get in the line to clock out. So that is how they do it now.

Q: If the work day ends at 5:30, when does it start?

CW: It started about 7 o'clock.

Q: So 7 to 5?

CW: Yeah, 7 to 5. It's a 10-hour day.

Q: And you get half an hour for lunch?

CW: Half hour lunch.

Q: Is that typical?

CW: Typical, yeah.

Q: So you have to be up at 5:30?

CW: Yeah, be on the job at 7. You get down to the job before 7, but you're expected to get on the jobsite probably about 5 past 7, ready to work. Right now in town sometimes they've got buses that take you to work, and sometimes you don't have buses. When the job is completely built, it goes into a maintenance form and it becomes a maintenance contract and you get to work yourself. You don't have buses on maintenance, but on construction you have buses because that comes into the contract.

Q: Is this Syncrude or Suncor?

CW: This is jobs up in Syncrude that is typical. You don't have transportation to get to work. But in town you have transportation to get to work. Let's say you're working at, let me pick a jobsite now. Let's say you're working at Esso refinery and they have an expansion. What we call an expansion is more or less a phase of construction on the job that they're improving the production line on the job. So they have an expansion, and that is construction mode. You still have maintenance workers working on the jobsite, but these people are construction workers and they're being bused to work. It might be a major expansion. I've been at a major expansion out at Esso oil refinery and Petro-Can. Those are expansions on the jobsite. It goes into an engineer form where you'd get engineers, draftsmen, and they more or less make drawings and you do the project with lots of drawings. This is how you do the expansion. Just like Dow Chemical now, Dow Chemical is going to have a major expansion coming up very soon. We don't know directly all the contracts that are going to be given. We have what we call the non-union sector and the union sector. The building trades are the union side of the projects. The building trades look after all the unionized jobsites. CLAC or the Christian Labour Association look after the non-union side. There's a difference between us and the non-union, because the non-union don't have the same conditions as the union members. We have better conditions, better rates of pay. When I say conditions I mean like you only have 12 men to a crew and less, can't be over

12. If there are more than 12, then you've gotta have another foreman. A crew is 12 men, and the 12 men can be made up of tradesmen and apprentices.

Q: CLAC doesn't have any of those conditions?

CW: They have conditions, but they go outside of those things. They might have 15 or 16 men on a crew with one foreman. Foremen in the industry have lots of responsibility. They can be sued. If you have a foreman and a worker is being injured and they find it's negligence on the part of the foreman, he can be sued. The industry is better than when I came to Alberta. When I came to Alberta you didn't have so much regulations on safety. Now safety is paramount, it's number one. You get a worker injured on the jobsite, and the jobsite shuts down. If a worker has, unfortunately, been killed, the jobsite can be shut down for about a week for investigation before they resume work again. So there's lots of improvement in the construction industry from when I came here. I came here in '75, and things that you got away with you don't get away with now. When I came here in Fort McMurray you had to go and hide in the wintertime because you don't want a foreman seeing you go warm up and all that jazz. Nowadays you can't do that. You have to give the worker enough time if he's cold to go warm up and come back out on the jobsite.

Q: Is there a temperature limit?

CW: Well put it this way. Say it's -40. You will work but you have something covering over you. In other words, you build a cover so that you can have a heater inside or whatever, and you're not being cold. But to walk from let's say A to B, depends on the temperature; you can be very cold. You can get cold if you're outside. You dress warm, but no matter how warm you dress, after a while you get cold. I remember days we used to work on the vessels. I climbed on a vessel and you're up there for about half an hour and you get cold. You gotta come down and go warm up. You can't freeze up there. Temperature in places like Fort McMurray is very, very cold; it's brutal. You get days where the windchill is another factor that's worse than just an ordinary cold day. The windchill goes right through you. They have a factor where it says you'll freeze in so many minutes; that's how the windchill is. I've seen days when they shut the job down

because it's too cold. I can remember once it wasn't because of the men being cold; the machinery wouldn't work. So it was more the machinery than the men; the machinery wouldn't work. But you know Donna, in this industry we, as Caribbean people, have contributed a lot. We have done a lot. As I was explaining to you before I came in here, we have different tradespeople. We have plumbers and pipefitters and welders that come to Local 488. We have Local 424. That's the electricians. We have the boilermakers, which is, is it 416? By the way, the boilermakers are. . .

Q: Is Stanny a boilermaker?

CW: Stanny? No, Stanny is, I don't think Stanny is a boilermaker, he could be an ironworker. I know Stanny pretty well because he's a big pan.

Q: He plays drums?

CW: Yeah, we call it pan. You know Slimmer Gomez?

Q: Yes, he was a steward too.

CW: Yeah, he was one of my stewards and we're good friends.

Q: Is Local 424 electricians?

CW: Yeah, 488 is the pipefitters. The boilermakers I think is 416. I'm not too sure. The boilermakers is not far from here on 114 Avenue or something like that. Then you have the Operators Union. They operate the cranes and all the machinery. The operators look after, like you might have a temper lift, you have to have an operator looking after it and it's from the Operators Union.

Q: Do you know what that local is?

CW: When I get the numbers I'll phone you and give you them. I know 47 is the Culinary Union that looks after the cooks and all the people that look after the camps. You have Labourers Union, which I think is 92.

Q: What are oil inspectors?

CW: You have inspectors from different crafts. You have the welding inspector and you have the inspector that works for the contractor themselves. They have a different name for them, inspectors or supervisors or whatever. Some of them are company people; some of them are union people. An inspector can be a welding inspector and he goes around and looks after the quality control, like to see if the weld is good when they X-ray it. As I said, you have different trades, and everybody plays a part. When you go on a job you have the Carpenters Union, and they build the scaffolding. You have different levels of carpentry. You have the scaffolders, who are part of the Carpenters Union. You have those that are a little bit more refined; they build the buildings, like camps and whatnot, rooms, bunkhouses.

Q: They are also in the Carpenters Union?

CW: The same Carpenters union, but you have different levels. The scaffolder is not really as skilled as the guy who looks after the wood. The scaffolder is one who puts the scaffolding together. They're tough, because they work in brutal winter on putting those scaffoldings together. They have to wear belts. Then you have the ironworkers, and they're another breed. Oh man. The work that they do to put that steel together is unbelievable. Let's say you have columns of steel; those are built by the ironworkers. Those are structures that you put the pipe on. When you have an ironworker putting those structures together, the height that they go and the beams that they walk on. . . . When I say the industry has gotten really tight now with safety, you have to wear a safety harness at certain heights. If you're caught without it, you're terminated. You gotta wear these harnesses. One time when it just started, Donna, it was a safety belt. But those things are not safe. A harness, if a worker falls he's got, we call it a rope but it's a thing with a shock absorber at a certain part of it. When the worker falls, it takes the shock before he hits the atmosphere so he doesn't have a spinal injury. They have been

improving those things over the years. When it started, it was a belt you put around your waist. But you fall with that thing, you break your back. But the harness now is something that's straight up, and you fall straight; you're coming down as a projectile. You don't more or less have the injury that you'd sustain if you were just wearing a safety belt. Those things you have to do when you go on the job; you've got to more or less do those things. They give you harness training and stuff like that. It's standard, and you get those things at the indoctrination. When you go on a jobsite nowadays, you've gotta be indoctrinated. When you go through indoctrination you go through all these various levels of training before you go on the jobsite. The industry has got really modernized and safety conscious. You know why, Donna? Contractors bidding on jobs: if you don't have a good safety record, you don't get the job. These are a lot of times unionized jobs, building trades jobs. I don't know for the CLACers, but I know in the building trades unions if you're not a good contractor, you bid on the job and if your safety record is not good you can forget about getting the job. You have to have good indoctrination programs. Some of them, you have books that you have an indoctrination book with all the various things, the dos and the don'ts, in the indoctrination book. The contractors print those books and you have to more or less adhere to certain rules and regulations on the jobsite. You go on a jobsite; you can't go there without a hardhat. They catch you without a hardhat and you're terminated. They catch you without your safety glasses, you're terminated. You gotta wear earplugs in certain areas. What are some of the things that you must have when you go on the jobsite? Safety gloves and safety boots. They've got to be steel toed, they've got to be a certain height. Nowadays you go in certain places and you have a green badge on the boots that says that boot has been certified. All those things are in the safety manual. The industry is looking after the human being. At one time it was the job came first; now men come first.

Q: What caused this change?

CW: Too many accidents and too many deaths on jobsites.

Q: Was that a liability for the companies?

CW: Yeah, liability for the company. You had to pay money to families and whatnot, and to eliminate all those things, and other factors why they think human life is more important than the job. This is why you find that safety is we call it paramount on the jobsite nowadays; safety is number one. As I said, there's certain dos and certain don'ts. You're more or less leaving the jobsite and you walk in certain areas to get off the jobsite. You don't walk outside of those areas. If you have an area that you walk to get off the jobsite, you've gotta stick to that area. If you're caught because you're not supposed to be without certain protective clothing, you're down the road. It's no good to go to the union, because you're not going to get back your job. You broke the safety rules. So you've gotta pay the price or whatever. Another thing that the jobsite has improved now is drinking. I remember when I came here drinking was allowed, but after a while it wasn't allowed. You come on the job and you're intoxicated--go home. Don't come on the job intoxicated.

Q: What about drugs?

CW: This is where you have the critical period. At one time marijuana was a no-no. Now they gotta be very careful, because in certain places the marijuana is legal. They have to have a level where you're not tested but a level where you're tested. If you're tested and you're with that level, despite it being legal, you're still off the job. You have a certain amount of marijuana in your system. That is a very funny drug. It stays in your fat cells for more than 30 days, 30 days or more. This is why it is going to be challenged. This person had marijuana two weeks ago and he's being checked. Are you going to terminate that person when it's not like he used it just last night? It's going to be something that lawyers and contractors and unions are going to have lots of fights, marijuana. Other drugs, once you use it and come on the jobsite, they'll pick it up easy. Marijuana is not the same, like cocaine and stuff like that; it's not allowed either. You're not allowed to have those things in your system.

Q: So the urine test picks up all of those?

CW: Yeah they pick up those things. You have a urine test and you can have nasal too and you can have saliva. So you have different levels of testing. A pee test doesn't pick up all of it, but

the saliva will. They can do the swab test and they can do the urine test. When you go through for indoctrination they'll do both saliva and urine. Those are done at a different location before you go on the jobsite, because you have to pass indoctrination before you go on the jobsite. As I said, nowadays safety is the number one thing on the job. If the company's not safe, the company doesn't get the contract, because they don't have a good safety record.

Q: When you started in Fort McMurray, were drugs allowed?

CW: Drugs were allowed.

Q: Was drug use prevalent?

CW: Oh yeah, it was the norm. People come on the jobsite; guys used to smoke at night and get high. They go on the job the next day and they're not tested. They're a liability to themselves and the crew. Over the years they found out that that is more or less a detriment to the jobsite and the company. So they more or less outlawed those things. That's why they have drug tests. It's funny; over the years that was never a problem for me – I don't smoke and I'm not a big drinker. I'm a social drinker. If I go out like to a party, I might have a beer or two. I can't remember myself ever getting drunk in my life. I might feel tipsy but never getting drunk. People get drunk and don't know where they are. I don't get like that; never have in my life. That is something that I frown upon. Another thing right now, Donna, I must come back to. Women in the industry now, you've gotta be very careful. Women are protected. Women get...a lot. When I was a job steward I said to the men, be careful what you say to the women. Watch your mouth. I tell them that. Men are always men and it's not the norm, because women will say that's a sexual abuse or whatever. It's a fine line. So you've gotta be very careful around women in the industry. As a job steward I used to say to the guys, you're working with a female; watch what you say to her. Let her seize the initiative if she wants to say something; then you can respond. Don't you more or less be the aggressor. I remember I was working with a guy; his name was Tony. He's from one of those eastern block countries like Poland or whatever. He was working with this lady. Her name was Dorothy. She's a Native lady. She says to Tony, I need a foot of two-inch pipe, Tony. He said something like, you can't take a foot, and she laughed. You say that to

another female, and she will report you. So it depends on who you're dealing with. In other words, they're not able to take a joke; other females couldn't take a joke. I had to be as a job steward able to sit them down. Let's say you have a confrontation or you have a dispute. I'd get both people to write a statement and I'll have them together and try to squash whatever the grievance is before it gets to a different level where we have to go into the office. It's a very fine line in industry now with women folks. You have to be very careful what you say and what you don't say. Sexual harassment is a big charge, big charge in the industry now. At one time you didn't have that problem, but now it's there. Women do everything now in the industry. They build scaffolding, they weld pipe, they do electrician work, they operate big machinery. They do everything. I'm going to a conference in Jasper very soon, sometime about the 18th of September until about the 21st. It's the Building Trades of Alberta conference, and it's always in Jasper. It's a two-day conference where you have contractors and politicians of different levels that are being invited. The director of the Alberta Building Trades, his name is Terry Parker. Their office is on, let me see if I can remember the street. It would be about 159 or thereabout, just around the Pipefitters Union hall before you get to 156 Street. It's a road down there, and that's where the Alberta Building Trades office is.

Q: It's on an avenue?

CW: It's on a street.

Q: So you're going to Jasper?

CW: About the 18th of September, if my memory serves me right.

Q: Why did you mention that conference?

CW: Because this Alberta Building Trades are a part of the union structure. In other words, they try to get them jobs, the building trades. In other words, they look after the interests of the unionized contractors or the unions; they look after the unions. I'm just going to look up the date I'm going to the conference. The 18th of September, and the 19th and the 20th is the

conference, and it's in Jasper. People like Danielle Smith, provincial or city politicians, are invited, and contractors and owners are invited too. The contractor and the owner are different. You have the owner, which is the Syncrude people or the Suncor people or the Petro-Can people. The contractor is the people like the PCLs or the Bechtels or all the various contractors that look after the jobs, the ones that bid on the jobs. The building trades, they look after the contractors.

Q: Worley Parsons as well?

CW: Well, Parsons is one of the contractors.

Q: What is the relationship between the union and the contractor?

CW: The union works with the contractor to keep harmony on the jobsite. Let's say you have PCL, which we used to call Poole, but that's what they call themselves now – PCL. You have Cana and there's different contractors. They have their representative of the contractor, which is like the labour relations people and the people who work for the contractor, and they will go on the jobsite. Some of them are superintendents, supervisors, whatever. But the union works with the contractor and the client. The client is what we call the owners. The owner of a plant is like the Suncors and the Syncrudes and the Petro-Cans. They have their employees that represent the owners. They are the ones who have the money, the ones who own the plant. The contractors bid on the jobs.

Q: When you started to work in Fort McMurray, did you travel by bus?

CW: We used to drive. We'd drive to the jobsite, and when you get to the jobsite you park your vehicle up in a big parking lot and it's there for a week or two. You go to your bunkhouse or your room, you'd have a key, and that's where you'd stay for the week.

Q: Did your family stay in Edmonton?

CW: The family is in Edmonton and you commute; in those days before cell phones came in we had to use those phone booths. In the '70s we used to have take our turn to phone home. You'd go in the phone booth and phone your wife and talk to her and whatever. You might phone twice a week. I used to leave Edmonton on a Sunday,, get there Sunday night, and wake up in your bunkhouse Monday morning and go to work. We used to work five days. When I used to work in Fort McMurray it used to be four tens and an eight. You work 7 to 5:30 for four days and 7 to 3:15 on the Friday. You either drive home or you used to catch a charter bus to get home. Some guys used to charter the buses and you as a worker used to buy your bus ticket to get home if you don't want to drive. If you drive, you have various times when you leave to go back to camp. You could leave in the evening or you could leave in the night, depending on how much sleep you want. It was a tough life. But those were the days where you're working in Fort McMurray, what we call in town. Places like Sundance and Keephills, those are powerplants, coal-fired powerplants. Right now we're in a new phase where you call it environment and climate change and all that. This is a new phase gonna come in now.

Q: What is Aurora?

CW: Aurora is in Fort McMurray. Aurora is a little bit further than Syncrude. You've gotta go across the bridge to nowhere to go to Aurora. When you get to Fort McMurray there's a bridge as you leave the town, and you go over that bridge to go to the Syncrude and the Suncor. To go to Aurora nowadays, there's another bridge further up that they go across to go to Aurora and CNRL. Those are two plants over the side of the other bridge. There's two bridges in Fort McMurray. There's one just after you leave Fort McMurray town; there's a bridge there. Those are over the Athabasca River. There's one further up; after you leave Syncrude you go over that bridge and go to Aurora.

Q: What is Aurora?

CW: Aurora is a plant; it's a process plant.

Q: Is Suncor a process plant?

CW: Yeah, Suncor, Syncrude—all of those plants up in the Fort McMurray area are process plants. They extract the crude from the sand; then the crude comes down here somehow to be refined. This is why you have all these storage tanks in different places just outside of Edmonton. . . You guys have that pit that never ceases, always seems to be producing tar. The tar looks after the whole Caribbean. Geographically Trinidad was part of Venezuela until they broke off.

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

CW: Well you can ask more questions and I'll answer them.

Q: How do you think your working life has impacted your family?

CW: Well that's a tough question. When I left, my wife and children sacrificed a lot, me being a construction worker. This is all the way back from England, because in England I was a construction worker too. I'm always sometimes working away from home. When I'm working away from home, my wife is the mother and father of those kids. She's the disciplinarian. In other words, there's no father around, no male figure for a while. I don't come home until the weekend, when I come on the weekend. She had to take them, if they're playing hockey she gotta take them to hockey practice, get the skates sharpened. If Maxine is going dancing, she gotta take her to the ballet classes and things like that. I remember when I came here I bought a ...with a Ford Custom. I bought it and I used to have somebody as a driver and you take a ride with another person, a carpool. We were living in Meadowlark Village; that's the first place I lived in Edmonton, Meadowlark Village.

Q: That's Jasper Place?

CW: No, that's up in front of Misericordia, Meadowlark Village. I was living at Meadowlark Village and this Ford Custom was parked in the parking lot. My second boy says to his mother, mom, what...] That was motivation for her to go and get her license. So she got her license and

she passed her driving test probably in the second or third time or whatever. So she started driving so she could take them all over the place when I'm away. It was a big plus for the family, because she didn't have to take bus no more. When I came here I had to buy one of those street map things and that's how I got around on the buses. The first year I came here from Thompson, Manitoba, I remember I took the kids to Klondike. At that time Klondike was fun, and I took them to Klondike. When we were ready to leave to catch a bus, I can't find my second boy; he's missing. We went all over the grounds looking for Garfield; at that time we used to call him Gary. Looking for Gary, no Gary. When I came here he was five and a half. We went to the lost and found area and this big kid is bringing Garfield on his shoulder. I said, where you been? He said, I got lost. So anyway we leave and catch the bus and come back. I think we had to change at Jasper Place here and catch another bus to go to Meadowlark Village. When I got the vehicle, that was another experience learning to drive in the winter. I'm driving on 165th Street and right by that Catholic church there at the corner and the school, this guy stopped. I'm trying to stop there and this vehicle is not stopping and it run into the back of this guy. I said, holy mackerel. So from my experience I had to teach my wife how to maneuver and drive in the winter in Edmonton. I said, don't brake, because you'll lock up the wheel. I said, if you have to, gear down or steer away or whatever, and keep your distance. That's one of the most important things, keep your distance from other vehicles. So learning to drive in Edmonton in the wintertime was an experience. You have to drive so you don't run into people's vehicles or whatever. You never more or less say that you won't get in an accident in the winter, but you try your best. You have to more or less use your shoulder check and your mirrors and all that jazz. Those things are important. My wife learned to drive over here, but man, passenger drivers are something else. She's always telling me what to do and what not to do. I just take things in my stride. I don't try to be aggressive. I just say, you forget that I've been driving a long time before you. She says, so? But as I said, my family in Edmonton sacrificed a lot. My wife did a lot to raise her children with me being away most of the time. That was more or less something I always appreciated with her. Discipline is something that I believe in. To me it's critical for children being disciplined when they're growing up, because they become better adults in society and they in turn are more or less able to do the same thing with their children, because they become disciplinarian too. My daughter was the last one, because the two boys are older. I remember when I'd come home from Fort McMurray and my eldest boy said to me, because

he's three years and one month older than his sister, he said, how does she get away with it? She was very lippy and she argues a lot. I used to say blood follows vein. My mother, God bless her soul, she's dead and gone; she argued a lot too. I argue. So it was hereditary, handed down. So my daughter is very lippy and now she's getting the same thing with her second boy. I say, it's karma, you're getting what you used to do. I think life is a progression. I said to myself, if you don't raise your kids properly in this world they become juvenile delinquents or they're a menace to society. I think if you play the part of the good parent and try your best. . . I'm gonna give you a life experience, Donna, that I say to myself. I can't believe it. My second son, he came home, because he was living in B.C. for a while, he came home with his kids. He has three kids; he has two daughters and a son. He's talking to his first kid, and he kneeled down on the ground eye level with the kid and was talking to the kid. I'm saying, huh, that's a new one, I've never seen that before. It's something that he's teaching me because I would never do that, kneel down on the ground at eye level with this child to talk to him. He's saying to the kid, what did daddy say? I'm saying, hmm. So in life everything is a progression; it goes in stages. You learn as you go along. I always said to my kid, you can teach me things. I always tell them that – I can learn from you. I remember I was working in Edmonton and I came home from work and my second son was upstairs. He had thrown a rock and it finished up in a camera glass. He was worried that I was going to give him the strap. I called him down and said, what did you learn today at school? He said, well you don't throw rocks on the street. I said, well listen. You remember that, don't you? I didn't flog him. My mother was different than I am, strapping for everything. That was strictly the Caribbean way. They loved to more or less discipline with the strap. But I didn't believe in that. I believe if you can talk and more or less get through to the kid, that is effective too. I more or less learned a lot when I was growing up in Jamaica and I emigrated to England and then come to Canada. I say, in life you never finish learning; you're always learning. Life is progressive. That is just my mantra; that's my way of looking at life. If you have any other questions you want to ask me, I don't mind.

Q: What is the B pressure test?

CW: B pressure test is the pipe is set up, you have a groove, and you put two pipes together and you have a little gap where you as a welder are gonna put a bead inside that gap. That bead

is the initial strength of joining those two pipes together. So you put the root in. It's called a root, the first bead. When we came here, that first bead was put in with a rod called 6010. That is the name of the electrode. Then you could fill and cap with the same rod, which is a 6010 rod, and it's very aggressive or it burns. Later on when we finished building Syncrude--Syncrude was built by Bechtel as a contractor, and all of those wells were built with 6010 rod. When we more or less left that jobsite, we started to weld with 6010 for the root. You fill and cap with a rod called 7018. It's a low agitating rod, it's grain texture, and it welds a bit smoother. They put the filler and the cap, and that is the composition of the weld.

Q: The cap is 7018?

CW: 7018. So you have the filler and the cap done with 7018, but the initial pass is done with 6010; it's a root pass. It's a rod specially designed to put in the first bead, as we call it. That's the composition of a B pressure test or a welding job when you put two pipes together. That is you do a weld on a pipe. The 7018 you put the filler and the cap, because you've got to fill that groove. The groove is a V. You have the bevel and the bevel, and once you put them together it forms a V. Then you've gotta fill that V, which is a root pass, a filler and cap. That is the combination of how you do a weld.

Q: Is that what you teach in apprenticeship class?

CW: Yeah, that is what you teach all welders. If you don't do a good bead, the rest of the weld will fail. The bead is the most important part of the weld; that's the strength of the weld. When the bead goes in, Donna, it's about one eighth over the inside of the pipe, and it forms a bead where it's uniform all the way around. That's where they X-ray to see if the weld is good, they X-ray that. That's how they do non-destructive testing of a weld. When you're gonna do an X-ray of a joint, nobody can be in the area. It's radioactive. Just like you'd have the same procedure in the hospital. You can't be anywhere where they have radioactive without proper protection. So that is how they do a weld test and how we learn to weld.

Q: When the weld is finished, who does the inspection?

CW: We call it the QC radiographer. It's done by machinery that they put and it takes a picture of the weld. You call it an X-ray. It's a picture of the weld, the complete weld. Then you get inspectors who go and have a look at the picture, and they'll know if it's a good weld or it's a bad weld. They are the ones who more or less view the picture of the weld. They call them inspectors and radiographers. If you have more questions you can ask, no problem. But if at any time you want another meeting or whatever, if you didn't capture everything, I'm at your disposal.

Q (Don): Does the owner choose the contractor?

CW: Yeah, the owner makes that choice. The contractor is the Bechtels. They come from the States and they used to build big plants in Alberta at one time. The last time I worked for Bechtel was in Lloydminster; they did the Lloydminster plant. Bechtel is a big contractor. So is PCL, but PCL is not as big as Bechtel. You have the spinoff of Bechtel, and I forget their name. But they're big too and they come from the States. I think at one time Bechtel was owned by the vice-president to Bush; he was part-owner of Bechtel. What you have is you have the owner, the contractor, and the workers or the various unions that form the composition of the jobsite. To build a plant you've gotta have pipefitters and welders, boilermakers, scaffolders, electricians, and labourers. Funny enough, the labourers might think that they're the lowest part of the jobsite, but they form a very important part. If you don't have the labourers, just like if you don't have the street cleaners, a lot of things can't happen. So you've gotta have the labourers. They are very important on a jobsite. Without labourers you don't get the bunkhouse clean, you don't get the lunchrooms clean, the tables clean and all that. Labourers form a very integral part of a jobsite.

Q: When that choice of a contractor is made, certain contractors work with the unions and certain ones don't. Bechtel always works. . .

CW: Always works with the building trades. They're a big company, all over the world. When I came here and I worked with Bechtel, Horton Steel are all over the world too. In some places

they call them Chicago Bridge. They build bridges and they build tanks. So they form a very integral part of a contractor. The contractor will hire various sectors of the unions. In other words, they're the contractor that hires the pipefitters and welders, they hire the operators, they hire the electricians, they hire the labourers, the cooks, everybody; they hire everybody. So they hire all the various crafts from various different units. The ones that come on very late are the plasterers and insulators.

Q: In the '80s there was that big turnaround, and most of the buildings now are being put up non-union. Are there still more of the unionized contractors in the oil industry?

CW: If I might be quite honest with you, in the unionized industry there's a higher quality of work than the non-union side. Our quality is superior to the non-union. In other words, they'll cut corners. We're not allowed to cut corners. In other words, our quality has got to be high up there. This is why I'm saying that sometimes, like I remember a job up at Suncor that was built non-union and we had to come in and clean it up, more or less correct their mistakes. It's like you'd say to yourself that they pay double for the contract. You're trying to go cheap and it costs you more. Another thing that we have in the industry is conditions. Our conditions are superior to theirs. Certain things we have to adhere to. It's like you have more or less rules and by-laws that we gotta follow. Like when you go on a jobsite, a foreman of 12 or less for a crew. As I said before, the foreman is liable. If something happens on the jobsite, the first person you go to is the foreman. In the union industry you have foreman, you have general foreman, you have superintendent. That's how you have it, the progression. Foreman, workers; general foreman, superintendent. You have the super, the general foreman, the foreman – that's how it works in the unionized trade. As I said, the building trades more or less go to the Chamber of Commerce and say, well you gotta go to the building trades unions to get quality work or whatever. They more or less voice for the building trades unions, their voice. That's why this conference that is coming up, you're gonna have the politicians and the contractors and the owners attending, and also the union people.

Q: How do you get called to the jobs?

CW: How you get called to a job is once a job has been allocated to a contractor he will put in the call to the union for the amount of men they need at a certain time. When you have a jobsite for a start, you have excavation to clear the land and what not. Then once it's ready for construction, they put up the buildings like your structure for people to come on the jobsite. Then they're ready for certain type of workers. The boilermakers come on first; they gotta put up the vessel. The vessels have got to go up before the pipefitters are ready to put in the pipe. So the pipefitters will come in after the boilermakers. Ironworkers and boilermakers will come on about the same time, because they've gotta have the structure. The structure is the framework for the pipes to run along those frames. When you have a building, it's gotta have fundamental columns and whatnot. So this is what you have on the jobsite. Various crafts and unions are premier, and the scaffolders and carpenters are on there very early as well because they gotta build the scaffolding for the men to climb and go do what they're doing. So there's a progression. You have painters come very late because they don't come until everything is in place. So with the insulators, because in Fort McMurray those pipes gotta be insulated and they gotta be heat-traced. The heat-tracing is done by the pipefitters and electricians. The pipefitters will probably do copper tubing and things like that. The electricians will use electric tracing, so a different type of tracing.

Q: So it's the union that actually chooses who goes on the job?

CW: How it works is, you have a board. You have a thing called, the contractor can have a name hire where he chooses a worker that he wants and it gives him that luxury, that opportunity. You also have to call men off the board. They have to more or less come. In other words, you go in the union hall and they call the names, and you stop the dispatcher and say, I wanna go on that job. That's how it works. So you're being chosen by a number board. You have a board that your names are being called out. Then you would stop the dispatcher and you get a slip and go on the job. But then when you go on the job, a welder is very important because he's got to pass a test. If he doesn't pass the test he can't go on the job. The pipefitter goes on the job as long as he's got his ticket or his more or less what you get from the apprenticeship board or the boiler branch. We used to give the pipefitters heck sometimes. We'd say, you're a glorified labourer; you're not a tradesman. Like in anything else, you have good, better, best. You have good

pipefitters; you have bad pipefitters. You have good doctors, bad doctors; good nurses, bad nurse. In every sector of life you've got those that are highly skilled.

Q: How does seniority factor into this?

CW: The seniority goes according to how you go on the jobsite, and that sometimes can be abused. You first go on the jobsite, you should be the last one to leave. But it doesn't work like that all the time. There was a senior on the jobsite where we said, when the layoff time comes, you get rid of the dead wood. Those that are not good tradesman are gonna get laid off. So they go back to the hall. But then there's a thing that we have in the union hall where we say you should have a more or less a report card, where the foreman and the GF should send us a report on that worker saying he needs upgrading or he's not as good as he's supposed to be; he needs improvement. They don't always follow those rules. When I was an agent in the union, I specialized in that. I said to the contractor, I said, where is the report card on so and so? I need to know why he is he being laid off all these jobs. Is he not a good tradesman? You need to get those things. We need to know if you need to go and get upgrading, you need to finetune your skill. We have instructors; at the pipefitters hall we have a school. That is, the educational department looks after the school, and we have instructors. You have the welding school also down there, and the guys do the test down there. When you do the test, they cut four strips out of the pipe. It's a four-inch pipe and they cut four strips, and they bend it one way and they bend it the other way. It's bent against the root and it's bent against the cap. You grind it off until it's almost the same level as the material. Then they put it in this machine and it's a pressure machine, pressure. It bends the straps, and if there are no defects, the metal comes out just the same as it's supposed to be. It bends just like the parent metal. If there's a defect, it opens against the cap or against the root. Most of the time it's the root that is the problem, because if the root has a defect it will break or it will open up. If it opens up over eight, you fail the test. You understand what I mean? When we do weld tests, you cut the straps out, and the inspector who gives the test is the one who marks it. It's about an inch, the straps are. You grind them, and if you grind too much and take too much out you can fail too. You've gotta grind it so that it's just as flat as the bar. You can't grind too deep; you gotta grind at just the same level. Then they bend it against the root and they bend it against the cap. Two are bent against the

root; two are bent against the cap. If you have a defect in any one of those materials that you put in the weld, it will open up.

Q: As a business agent, what did you find regarding camp conditions?

CW: You go on the jobsite and the camp is part of the what you see at the jobsite. If the conditions are not up to par, it's got to be dealt with with both the contractor and the client. Both the client and the contractor look after the camp. You have camp committee meetings and you have meetings on the jobsite. The meeting on the jobsite, the men will tell the foreman what the conditions are: the bag lunch is not up to par, the breakfast eggs weren't cooked properly, the menu needs to be adjusted. In other words, you have to have different things on the menu each day. The cooks put the menu up and you come in in the evening or morning and look on the menu and see what's on the menu, and you choose what you want for breakfast and what you want for supper. When you go into the bag lunch area, you choose what you want to take for your lunch as well. That is how the camp runs. It's looked after by all levels of the union, the contractor, and the owner; that's how the camps are looked after. Everybody has a part to play in the men's satisfaction.

Q: What changes have you seen in Edmonton since you came in the '70s?

CW: I came here in the '70s. Granted, we didn't have so many communities, because we didn't have Mill Woods and we didn't have no West Edmonton Mall or nothing like that. When I came here, you had the Misericordia Hospital; you didn't have the Gray Nuns. You had the Royal Alex, you had the Charles Camsell, and places like that. You had to be more or less, in terms of racism in those days, you had to use common sense and judgement. You can't pick up on everything. You can know when a person is really racist or whatever. I used to have, when I go in the lunchroom, we used to call it thick skin. You have to have thick skin to deal in the construction industry. You might have a white friend and he says, come here Black so and so; you come here you honky, or something like that. They're joking. But you know when somebody's joking and somebody's serious. We have to work together. But over the years people learn to accept, because you had more Blacks coming into Edmonton as the years progressed. It becomes the

norm that they had to learn to accept. When they came here first, just like even in England, they couldn't get places to rent, because they wouldn't rent it to you. But as time goes by, it's improved. They learned to accept different races that come along. The other thing you have to do is learn to treat people's property with respect; don't abuse people's places. That's something that I'm terribly against. You gotta treat everybody's place like you'd like somebody to treat yours. The same thing in Canada or Edmonton is in England. When you emigrated to England in the '40s and '50s and '60s, you couldn't get a place to rent. People wouldn't rent a place to you. They open the door and see a Black person, they shut the door. So everything is a progression in changes and acceptance. Does that answer your question? I more or less have learned to live with the Caucasian people just as they've learned to live with me. It's a balancing act. You treat people how they treat you. You don't get aggressive for everything. Sometimes you've got to play the blind eye; you didn't hear that. It's a part of life.

Q: What was Meadowlark Village like when you moved in? Was it new?

CW: It wasn't new but to me the conditions living there were okay. It's being called as a townhouse complex. You didn't have a basement; you had three levels: you had a ground floor, second floor and a top floor. That was Meadowlark Village: that was how the houses were built. I had a three-bedroom place at Meadowlark Village. The bedrooms are on the second floor. Then there was a living room or I don't know what you'd call it on the top floor. My kids used to be on the top floor playing, the boys. I'd come in in the evening when I'm in town and I'll hear my second boy saying to my eldest son, make me, make me. They're having a good brother fight, and I just play like I don't hear. I didn't follow up with everything with my boys. My daughter used to get away with a lot because she used to be the girl. I used to say, well you can't beat up on your sister. So she'd get away with a lot; she really got away with a lot. My son used to say, how does she get away with it? I remember once when I was living at a guy's place on 163rd Street and almost 95th Avenue. I held my daughter by both hands because her mom told her to wash up the dishes. She was just trembling in my hand, because she was small in body. I said, I can't even find a place on you to hit. And I just let her go.

Q: Were the people in the townhouses from different places?

CW: Yeah, there were different races of people. There were Blacks, there were French, you name it. People started to come to Edmonton from those days coming into the city to look for work. As I said, I was living right in front of the Misericordia Hospital. You had the townhouses and you had the high rises right in the middle. You had shops right at the corner, like a little strip mall. That townhouse was good community living. I lived there from '75 to about '80 before I moved. I rented a guy's house at 9421 – 163 Street right in front of Enunciation in there, before I bought my house where I'm living right now in La Perle.

Q: What made you move to Meadowlark Village?

CW: I had a friend and when I came here he was looking, because I didn't drive, was looking for places that were renting. That was renting and I got a townhouse to rent there and I took it.

Q: Your friend was living there too?

CW: No, he was living in St. Albert. His name was Frank Barnet. His wife died. His wife was Pam Barnet. She passed away. She used to go to that church at 149th.

Q: So, after five years, you bought a house?

CW: After four years at 163rd Street I bought a house in La Perle in 1990, and I'm still living there.

Q: So the townhouse was just temporary until you were able to get your own place?

CW: Well, it's a progressive stage. When you're saving money and think you can have your independence, you buy your own place. Then you don't have to answer to no one. You're not paying rent; you're paying a mortgage. So you have your own place. As long as you can afford to pay the mortgage and renew it when the time comes, you pay the mortgage. When then the time comes you can own the place outright, you do that too.

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

CW: As I said, I came here for this interview, and you guys are the ones asking the questions and I try to supply the answers to the best of my ability. As I said to Donna, if she leaves here and she says, wow this part I didn't get from Carl, she can always call me back. I'm at your disposal. I think the project that she's doing is beneficial to people that come here and would like to know how Edmonton and Alberta more or less was constructed from the bottom up to where it's at now. Now you've got different communities and different rural areas. Recently my son was living in Hampton; I didn't even know about the Hampton at one time. The Hampton is in the west end. All the way down to Lessard and down in that area before you hit Anthony Henday, there are different communities. The other day I was looking and they had a little bit of violence in ...Place and I said to myself, wow, I didn't expect that in that area. A little bit of gun play going on. I said to myself, it spills over from the States all the way over here, people running around with guns. That's another thing. I can't believe what's happening in the States. My daughter lives over there and my wife says she worries about her grandchildren every day, because you just have to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. But that's how life rolls. You come here one way; you don't know how you're gonna leave.

[END]