

Ian Hendry, WWCCA



A lifetime in the construction industry.

I was born in Carlisle, England September 3, 1946. My mom, dad and I moved to Toronto, Canada when I was 1 year old. My mother's sister and family came first, and they sponsored us. It was a transition, a lot of people from Europe were doing that. Most from England and Scotland came through Canada. I attended grade school for a year, then after my brother was born in 1953, we migrated to Whittier, California for a better life which is where we both grew up.

Both my parents worked hard; my mother had 2 jobs in the beginning. She would work during the day at a manufacturing company and my father worked as a machinist at night, they would pass each

other. We had a pretty good life but were not well off by any means. My father did have a car, but my mother never drove. When we were younger, we would walk 2-3 miles to Thrifty or Woolworths. There were a few other small stores there and a grocery store. Sometimes we may grab a bite to eat and walk back home in the evening.

I attended Pioneer High School in Whittier where Pam and I met when she was a Freshman. She chased me around the track trying to trap me. We went together for all 4 years. We will be celebrating our 54th Wedding Anniversary in October. I went into the service in the early part of 1966, waited for her to graduate and got married that same year.

My buddy and I both passed the test for the Air Force but there was a waiting list. While we were waiting, we both received draft notices for the Army and decided to go down to the recruiter to find out what to do. He said there was a chance we may not get a call by the date on the letter and we would end up in the Army. We decided to walk into the Naval recruiter's office and got sworn in that day. We were supposed to go in under the buddy plan and be together during the length of our entire service. I was not a citizen yet at the time, carried a green card so waited an extra week to go down to San Diego. I tried to explain to the chief about the buddy plan. He yelled at me and told me to get back in line and I never saw my buddy until 3 years later in Subic Bay, in the Philippines. He was there on a hospital ship at the same time and we went out to dinner and had a beer.

When I was at RTC, where you do your preliminary basic training, I got my assignment order. I

packed my sea bag and reported to the special services division at the Naval Training Center 2 blocks away. We did a lot of odd jobs, ran the gymnasium and the bowling alley, shuttled officers to North Island and airport.

A short time after I started, a civilian contractor that used to work on the base to get things fixed asked for 2 volunteers. Even though my dad told me never to volunteer for anything I raised my hand and we never stood any duty after that. We would dig holes, do plumbing and electrical, carpentry work. I was president of the Auto Club in high school and had a background in mechanical and engineering. If we finished our work on Thursday, I would be able to take the train to Whittier that evening to spend the weekend with my family then go back Sunday night. That went on for about 6-8 months.

Our offices were above the Officer's Club and you could look across and see the Naval Training Center on North Island where the aircraft carriers and big ships tied up. There was a ship that looked really neat, different than anything else. One of the First-Class Petty Officers told me it was the USS Saint Paul, the biggest gun ship, before they recommissioned the Battleship Missouri. It was a massive, intimidating looking heavy cruiser with 9 - 8" guns, a bunch of 5" and other guns as well. It was called the Show Boat because it was the Admiral's flagship, went to the Portland Rose Festival, Acapulco and Hawaii. They also filmed the movie "In harm's way" on it with Hendry Ford, John Wayne and Kirk Douglas. I was getting near my year duty at the training center and had to submit my dream sheet for my 3 choices of duty. Mine were an aircraft carrier, shore duty in Scotland or England and the USS Saint Paul.

I packed my bag and went across bay from Naval Training Center to North Island to report for duty on my new ship. We did go the Rose Festival, Acapulco and many other places and it did have the Admiral but they neglected to tell me that it also went to Vietnam.

We were getting paid about \$75/month and once we went to Vietnam, got combat pay of \$125/month. Pam ran the entire household on that. You could buy a basket full of food at the commissary for \$10 at that time. Our rent was maybe \$75/month. I sent all the money home except a few I used for cigarettes which were \$1 a carton at that time.

I ended up going on 3 tours to Vietnam as a 2nd class Petty Officer in the engineering department, each time staying 7 months then coming back for 3-4 months at a time. I worked on steam heating systems, air conditioning systems, boat motors, engines, compressors and generators. We were the biggest gun ship that was there. All of our assignments under Operation Sea Dragon were north of the NMZ (demilitarized zone) where all the fighting was. We would go out for 30-40 days at a time and fire the guns about 20-25 miles inland on the plane's coordinates onto the supply trucks on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

I signed up for an early out to go to school and got a 90-day early discharge date. For some reason everything came so quickly I got orders to leave 120 days early. We pulled into port in Japan and got bused to a Naval facility where they told us we would leave in the morning. We were not even there 1 hour, and they took us by bus to a little airport to an old twin prop plane

that had wicker seats. They flew us to Yokosuka, Japan where some of the guys went into town. After dinner I decided to go back into the terminal with a lot of other military people getting discharged at same time. I was laying down and one of the officers that was on our ship came over and told me to check in if I wanted to leave right away. They put us on another bus that took us to Tiger Airlines, a freight hauler converted for military. I flew to Travis Air Force Base in San Francisco then took a commercial flight to San Diego. Went to the Naval Base and they told me I was there too early, so had to send me back. The entire trip I just took was several days long.

Luckily, the Chief that was on our ship walked by and had me TDY assigned to him to keep me busy. All I did for the next 30 days was watch movies on a big screen in a back room to time mark sexual parts to be cut out so when the guys would come back and check movies out, they would not get in trouble.

After I got discharged my plan was to go to the school. We already had Darin and Pam was pregnant with Kevin. We wanted to move back to Whittier where our families were, so I decided to take a job and make some money.

I got a job at Ford Motor Company in Pico Rivera on an assembly line knowing I had a mechanical mind. I had to join the United Auto Worker Union but wait a month before I was actually in. They put me on very small intricate linkage setup on carburetors with lot of components. Needless to say, I was fired before my month was up. The shop foreman liked me and stood up on my behalf explaining I had no training. I did start something else but it was not my thing, I thank him in appreciation and decided to quit.

I started working at Herk Combustion Engineers and after a week I got a call from the Personnel Manager at Ford Motor Company again. A friend of his Bob Turner was a terminal manager at a trucking company called Hopper ONC. They had Oregon, Nevada, California and ran to Arizona as well. It was a little bit more money and I was one of their 2 Dock Foremen responsible for routes and getting the trucks loaded.

Bob went to work for Consolidated Freight Ways which was the biggest transcontinental carrier company in the US and Canada. He asked me to come join him after a few months. Again, a little more money. I started as a dock foreman then did dispatching but all on a much larger scale. I got to know a lot of the union people the entire operation was union. They opened a Long Beach terminal in Carson and I was promoted to Operations Manager to coordinate all the dock foremen.

I got to know Gordon Kramer who worked for us for a while and ended up at the California Trucking Association who handled all the trucking companies in CA. After a few years he asked me to follow him to handle labor issues. I had no experience in doing that, but he liked the way I dealt the union guys. I have been lucky and did not had to look for jobs, things have mostly been thrown in my lap like a domino effect. I was now in an office and had to learn how to deal with industrial and labor relations, personnel issues. I got to know people very well and figured

out if I can get to the top, it would make things easier. I made an asserted effort to make a relationship with the higher ups and understand where they are coming from and what their issues were. There were a lot of people who did not like unions back then. During the trucking industry strikes people were getting shot. It was very bad, especially back east where there was a lot of mafia influence. My philosophy always was to respect each other. It is a give and take, we are all fighting for our membership. At the end of the day, you should be able to shake hands, have a cup of coffee together and walk away.

I sat on a lot of committees and trusts for mechanics, aerospace workers for the trucking industry for several years. I was the chairman of the discharge committee and we handled more discharges in 1 month (about 400 cases with 35-60 discharged) then total cases with all trades combined at WWCCA in 35 years. I got to meet a lot of the union heads and leaders at district councils.

There was a small trust that met once a month, with an advisor Emil Matyas. He told me about a small plastering association looking for a director versed in labor issues. I didn't know anything about plastering, thought lath came in a bag had, no idea it was a steel product. I told him I was not interested. The trucking industry de-regulated, a lot of smaller nonunion companies came up and I did not see myself going any further in my position. I worked there for over 8 years.