

Dave Eriksen Interview Log

0:00:01.4 Debbie Fant introduces herself, interviewing Dave Eriksen at Fant's home in West Seattle, Washington, on November 12, 2013. She describes the project as interviews with union members around the state of Washington.

0:00:33.1 Dave is a member of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific.

0:00:44.2 Fant gets general biographical information from Dave.

0:01:20.2 Dave identifies himself as a merchant seaman. His first paying job was working for less than a week at the Old Spaghetti Factory in Seattle. It was a miserable job and disliked it so much, he worked in the afternoons and spent each morning looking for another job. Didn't like the steam heat in the kitchen. Almost passed out from the heat. He ended up getting a job for a print shop. That lasted a week, but he was let go. He didn't know how to run their machines and wasn't enthusiastically diving in. Then he ended up bagging groceries at the old commissary at Sand Point (an old Naval Base in Seattle on Lake Washington).

0:02:52.7 He did that for several summers, was at the University of Washington at the time. Then he started working at the Navy Exchange next door to the commissary. The bagging job was tips only, so he needed more cash.

0:03:26.2 He dropped out of college and worked at Seattle FilmWorks for a summer. He started taking a class at Seattle Central Community College for maritime stuff. His dad was a sailor, in the Navy. After he left the Navy, and retired, he'd been a Bosun (boatswain). He worked for Lockheed briefly at the shipyards, then the workforce was reduced. So his dad went to the Maritime Administration, and they directed him to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Seattle. So his father worked there all the time Dave was in college. Dave was at a change of command party one December, he'd always been visiting his dad on the ship to mooch a meal. The folks on board knew Dave, so he'd get a free meal and get to hang out with his dad. His father had been in the Navy so long, he wasn't at home very much. He'd get to spend time with his father while the ship was in port during the winter.

0:05:27.7 Dave was at Seattle Central, in the maritime program, and he didn't finish because he ended up getting work on a seafood processing ship. That was good for the experience, he worked on the processing line, not as a deckhand. But he didn't think that was a safe ship. It was poorly maintained. The dogs on the watertight doors didn't close, and they were going up to Alaska. They were going up to Norton Sound, were halfway up from Bristol Bay, and there was pack ice. They had a Japanese freezer ship that was going ahead of them to break the ice. They would process the fish, and the freezer ship would receive it. They all dropped anchor for the night. In the middle of the night he heard people running around, looked out the porthole, and saw some guys running around with ball fenders. He thought they were going to tie up alongside the freezer ship, but it turned out the ship had broken loose of its anchor and had

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come down right on top of them, alongside, was so close you couldn't have put your hand between both ships. Slipped right by, dragged anchor right past them. That was intense.

0:07:29.0 They did make it up to the Bering Sea, and he rode the ship back down to Seattle and realized that wasn't a situation he wanted to go back to.

0:07:40.9 The following year he got a job with NOAA as an ordinary seaman, the same year his dad retired from NOAA. His father taught him to get his foot in the door. Dave had worked a couple of casual jobs for NOAA beforehand, and had gotten good recommendations. He heard there was an opening on a NOAA ship through the grapevine. He went to talk to the Bosun, who looked for his application, and then he was hired. That's how you got ahead of everybody else.

0:08:21.6 Dave wanted to join the National Maritime Union because they represented NOAA. But because he didn't have his Z Card, his Merchant Mariner's Document, and NOAA wasn't going to give it to him until after two years' commitment, he had to wait. David was into his fourth year with NOAA before he was finally able to join the union. It was a government job, but the pay was lousy and he never got ahead financially. But it was fun, he learned a lot.

0:09:11.8 With NOAA, he wasn't so much a helmsman or coxswain. There would be survey boats or runabouts. He was on the ship MacArthur. They did pollution studies. The survey launches had troll nets, and they'd collect fish, bottom fish, and look for evidence of pollution in the fish. They did studies all the way down the coast to San Diego. After that they did studies with tuna dolphin. They'd go from San Diego to Hilo, Hawaii, to Panama or Costa Rica, either Guayaquil, Ecuador, or one year they went to Peru. Those foreign ports were great because you could spend five days in port.

0:10:32.9 These days, as a merchant mariner on cargo ships, you don't get that. You count the stay in port in hours. You're lucky if you're in one port more than 24 hours.

0:10:58.2 In 1990, he'd finished five years with NOAA. He was getting tired of the job, and he met a guy he'd sailed with before. The guy had been going to Seattle Central Community College and working on his associate degree with the intention of going to the University of Washington to complete a degree. The guy had been sailing out of the NMU Hall (National Maritime Union), getting those ships. He made enough money and had enough time off to go to school. So Dave was intrigued, having dropped out of college and still wishing he'd finished. So he figured he'd do that. He waited until January 23, the anniversary of the day he'd started working for NOAA, which was the day the Challenger exploded. That was his last day working for NOAA. He hung out, took some time off, a couple of months.

Eventually went to the NMU Hall and signed up and got a job pretty quickly. He got a 30-day relief job on a tanker and was amazed at how much money he was making! "This is union work!" It was a good scene, there were a lot of nice guys in the Hall. He did that one-month job and then chilled out for a while. Then got another job, a ship that went from Seattle to Japan,

Singapore, eventually went to Europe, to England and Amsterdam. They stopped in the Red Sea--Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on the way back. He got off in Japan and flew back, because he'd only signed on for 90 days. That was a relief job. He came home, did three months at home. Then did an East Coast job on an ammunition carrier--80 days. Then he found himself working on tankers for a long time, doing the West Coast to Alaska run.

0:14:51.6 Through those tankers, and a fluke with the union rules and all his prior experience, he was able to get a provisional Group One status. That meant he could get an Unlimited AB. They were trying to track mariners, it was during the first Gulf War. They were trying to fill their ranks, if you had this much experience you could get an express route to full seniority. So he applied for the Provisional Group One status, which could beat out any other group status except for a full Group One. But he could keep a steady job. If you weren't a Group One, you couldn't keep a permanent job. So he got a job on a tanker for a couple of years. There was a rule that you had a minimum of 30 days before you could take time off. He scheduled his work so that he worked for a while, took time off to take an academic quarter. Then he'd work a couple months again, then take the next quarter off to attend school. He put himself through school that way, the community college.

He ended up staying with the union and putting himself through the University of Washington, getting two undergraduate degrees. They were in Comparative History of Ideas and Teaching English. He did the Teaching English degree because he'd ruptured his ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in his knee, no, he'd torn a calf muscle and thought he'd be okay. He was recovering, then he blew out his knee. He was already on financial aid, so he continued the financial aid until he could get back to work. They were questioning that he hadn't declared a major, and he was so close to getting his History of Ideas degree but wouldn't have any income if he stopped going to school. He declared Teaching English as his degree, because it would take him longer. So he had to take a lot of other classes. He was able to return to work and make money before he fulfilled his degree program. By the time he graduated, he was able to fulfill two degrees. He is still paying off those loans. But he did get the National Dean's List for that year--the only year he was home for a full academic year. And his GPA was above 3.5 every quarter. He was really proud of that.

0:18:46.9 A Z Card is your Merchant Mariner's Document, your work papers issued by the Coast Guard. He got that after he was with NOAA for two seasons. By the time he got that he was also sitting for his AB exam, the AB Special. That's an Able-Bodied Seaman, which is equivalent to a journeyman. There are three basic levels of AB: Special, Limited, and Unlimited. Unlimited you have to have three years' of sea time to get that. NOAA only gave you credit for time at sea, not for time working the ships. Normally if you're working the cargo ship and you're in the shipyard working, you still get credit for working on the ship. But NOAA didn't work that way. So even though he was working on the ship while it was in port doing maintenance, running crane on deck, loading stores, doing crane maintenance, maintenance on davits. He did more work on a ship for NOAA while the ship was in port than he has while he's been on a ship at sea. But he didn't get credit for it unless he was out at sea. That was just the way it works.

0:20:37.8 Now his classification is AB Unlimited.

0:20:54.5 It is harder these days for anyone to get started in the industry compared to the way he started. He basically went knocking on doors, got his foot in the door with no real experience. His dad was a bosun, so he knew most of his knots already. They'd had farm animals, and his dad would say, "Throw a bowline around that animal's neck so you can control it." "What's a bowline?" "I'll show you!" Dave could tie a bowline, and that's a basic knot for seamanship. The rest he learned along the way, like for securing or lashing down gear. He thought it was interesting. He looks for the best possible knot for the situation. But he learned about crane work, operating different size and kinds of shipboard cranes. Operating small boats, maintenance on davits, all that stuff.

A davit is the thing that you keep your lifeboats in. It's how they're lowered to the water and held in place on deck. It's like two arms. Nowadays they have "gravity davits," the arms from the cradle position will drop down onto tracks and hang the boat over the side of the ship in a way that will allow you to get everyone aboard before continuing the lowering to the water. So, different kinds of ships, different kinds of davits. He launched boats while the ship was underway, recovered while it was underway. That's one element of the job.

Of course, there's steering the ship. It wasn't until the last two years with NOAA that he was able to do any helm time. Before that he was on deck, doing daywork. Not watch-standing. That whole evolution because NOAA was cutting costs and cutting personnel. They were having the sailors, the unlicensed deck people, stand watches on the bridge. Before, they had a dedicated quartermaster department, essentially second mates except in name, and they took charge of the navigational charts, kept them up to date. Helped the NOAA officers with the navigation, plotting courses. Did all the real work of being on the bridge. But they weren't getting paid as mates, didn't have mates' licenses. But a lot of them had done all this work when they were in the Navy. They'd get out of the Navy, go to the Coast Guard office, passed the third mate's exam, and made lots more money than they had before.

One guy, Steve, left NOAA and got a job with Vessel Traffic Service. He used to be a sourpuss. When he saw him last time, he was smiling and looking like a normal person. He said, "Steve! You look like you're in a really good mood, really happy!" He said, "I am, I got a job at VTS. It's the best thing!" He had a regular job, making way more money than with NOAA, be home every night.

0:26:17.4 Dave is leaving Thursday (December 14, 2013), a "fly-out job." You go to a ship that's not located in your port. It's the American Presidents Line (APL). It has some ships on the West Coast, but mostly they're going through Los Angeles and Oakland, from there they head out to the Far East. Those are the C-11 ships, like the Singapore, the Korea, the Philippines. Originally they had C-10s, the first new design of container ship where the house was located 2/3 to 3/4 away from the bow. It was a more modern design. The first C-10 was the Truman, and it was a big deal because she was a big ship. They had to dredge out the Oakland inner harbor, back in the mid-80s, to accommodate that ship. That was when he was working for NOAA. Those are

really nice ships. Then APL, under the umbrella ownership of Neptune Overseas Lines, NOL, which is Singapore's overseas lines, during the Bush administration, it was okay that these ships could be owned by a foreign company so long as the ships were flagged U.S. and had American crews and the subsidiary was owned by the U.S. APL was owned by a U.S. subsidiary, and they could operate between the coasts, it was like a loophole in the Jones Act.

But after a while, NOL realized that if they put these ships to serve the East Coast, they could serve one day from dock-to-dock, from a loading dock in Europe or Asia to deliver to the middle of America. It may take longer for the ship to travel by water to reach the U.S., but they'd save a day overland by moving cargo from Asia, transshipping it from Singapore, and delivering it to New York, Greater New York, which includes New Jersey. They figured that would improve delivery service to their customers, so that's what they do now.

0:29:30.5 Also, there was a lot of military contract work because the ships receive a military subsidy. That's a standard practice for a lot of U.S. flag ships. That proved profitable for NOL and APL, because APL was the only subsidiary of NOL during the global financial crisis where they still stayed in the black and made a profit, because the U.S. tax dollars going to the ships and their moving military cargos to the Persian Gulf. He worked on that run for a while, the Red Sea Express. Did that run for 2-3 ships, and he's going back to do it again.

0:30:23.3 Dave will fly to Newark, NJ, and the ship is at Elizabeth, NJ. Almost adjacent to the airport. He'll be on the APL Cyprine. He doesn't know what the designation is for that. For a while they were calling them C-12s, but he doesn't know what the designation is for that class of ship. They were under a foreign flag before, and the ships were a mess. They received a handful of those ships that were a mess, substandard conditions. It took all the sailors onboard quite a while to clean it up and bring the maintenance up to U.S. Coast Guard inspectable levels. Dave thinks that they belonged to APL or some other subsidiary of NOL. The C-10s were old, built in the 80s, like 30 years old. That's too old, when you go past 25 years. But they were really well-made ships, and that's how they could get so far along. Nowadays the ships are made to run into the ground, get another one. Cheaply made and short-lived. But the C-10s were so well made that they were durable. Some captains ran them hard.

0:32:49.7 One time they lost power going east through the Straits of Gibraltar. Going through the last traffic separation zone through Spain, and the whole thing went dead. In the best gallows humor, Charlie said, "Well, that was almost a career-ending moment!" Because there were ships ahead of them, ships behind them. But quite a lot of seaway. But the way they just lost power, they just curved to one side. They lost steerage first. Dave was on the wheel, they started switching over to different pumps, and nothing happened. All of a sudden the whole plant--lights went out. They just slowly started drifting south towards Africa. They drifted for two days before the engineers were able to put in jumper cables to power. They ran off the emergency generator for power to the main plant, and one other generator, they ran some cables to jerry-rig it. So they were able to "slow-bell" it with a tug escort and anchored off of Almeria, Spain.

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0:34:10.6 You immediately do a "Securité." Ship lost power in this position, just drifting, over the radio. You call the company, they contracted with some tugs coming out of Aleria. They were able to limp their way to an anchorage.

0:34:50.4 It turned out that there was a relay that allowed the. .. normally, you'll switch from one generator to another after so many days. So that one group doesn't get overworked. There's always something in reserve. They switched over, tried to switch back, and they couldn't. The generators were dying, and that caused the whole plant to shut down. You need to run generators for different things on different ship: provides electricity, propulsion, so you have banks of generators. But he believes the main engine is dependent on electrical current power for other things. The generators went down. There was a relay, maybe it was old or dirty, and they had problems isolating what the problem was. They brought in a port engineer, he flew in, port engineers usually have a lot of experience. The chief engineer had just been promoted to that position. He was a little over his head.

0:36:23.9 The Cyprine will go from Elizabeth, NJ. He hasn't been on this ship before, so he doesn't know the exact ports. But there were a handful of ports listed in the union newspaper: Leaves Elizabeth, goes to Charleston, SC, Savannah, GA. Then goes to Norfolk, VA, gets cargo there. There are two ports in the Mediterranean that he saw listed. He thinks its Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy, Egypt just before the Suez Canal. Doesn't know which is hit on the way in and which on the way outbound. Then there's a port in Oman, another one in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. He's not sure which order, inbound or outbound. The ship goes to Singapore, to Thailand, comes back and maybe stops at Singapore again, then hits Sri Lanka. He's not sure of the order, there might be another China port in the mix. But that's what he remembers what was published in the union paper for this run.

0:38:12.9 He doesn't know what the ship is carrying--not even the captain knows. It's all in containers. All you have on the manifest is maybe a HazMat listing of what might be inside there. If there's nothing hazardous, you have no idea. Only if it's hazardous.

0:38:36.7 One time they had a leakage, and the crew wondered what it was because it was causing their eyes to burn, noses and hands and skin to burn. It was a crazy irritant, and it turned out it was concentrated capsicum, pepper spray. They took a bunch of fire hoses to try to wash down the decks, but it got more concentrated around the drains, the scuppers. But it was like an oil, he doesn't know why they didn't use detergent to rinse everything off. They just ran seawater. At the time, he was heavily into habanero hot sauce, so it didn't bother him at all. People were freaked out. He took off his mask at one point to sniff the air, got a mild tingle. It wasn't so bad. Put the mask--a chemical respirator--back on.

0:39:52.8 Each trip is 70 days long, and he has to do two of them. Shipping rules, you have to do a minimum. Foreign articles rule. It's a shuttle run, that doesn't go to where a union hall is located. So on a shuttle run, you have to do a minimum of 120 days to get your transportation paid for to come back home, and a maximum of 6 months. After six months, you HAVE to get off the ship at the first U.S. port you arrive in. There are guys on this run that look like they're

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gonna do three trips. Dave doesn't understand why. That would be 210 days gone. He guesses those guys are really hard core. Dave will just do two. Four months and three weeks or something like that.

0:41:16.8 For most people, the idea of being gone for so long, that's a long time. How does Dave deal with that?

0:41:30.7 "Don't look back." Laughs. "Look forward." He's having some hopes that some of those ports, he'll have time to go ashore. Sardinia, for example, he got excited. Cagliari! Great, cool. Only two miles from the dock to the city? Sounds good--get a cab, go to town! Even if it's only five hours." If you're lucky enough to go ashore, he'll get something to eat, have a meal, a glass of wine, relax a little bit, see what's in the city. That's cool. He's been to Laem Chabang (Bangkok), Thailand, a couple of times. So he knows the beaches to the south, a U.S. military R&R town. Pattaya Beach is like Sin City there. You can get a nice resort place for a reasonable amount of money, less than it would cost in San Francisco in a nice hotel. Take it easy there, look for something other than "seedy."

0:43:12.3 Dave took a watch-stander job. That entails two four-hour watches on the bridge as helmsman and lookout. Assisting the mate, if he's inside. During the daytime, if he's on 8-12 watch, he's on the full time. If he's on during one of the other watch, you split the watch. Two hours on, then his watch-partner will relieve him. Dave will go down and do maintenance for a while. It's been awhile since he's done this. Matson Lines are different from APL. Nighttime, one man on the bridge unless it's cold and nasty outside. He's on lookout. The other AB is in the inside, in the house, with the mate, in case you need someone to steer all of a sudden. Maybe you'd be coming close to another ship, or they need help monitoring the radar. Generally assisting the mate, because he has a lot of stuff he needs to take care of--plotting the ship's position, doing the navigation. He can't be looking out at nighttime when he's got to keep up on the charts and plotting points and talking radio. Some ships only have one person on the bridge, but Dave thinks that's nuts. So two people in the house, one person on the bridge looking out. Because you can't always see, with a little bit of background lighting from equipment in the house, it's hard to see a spot, a faint light out on the horizon. Even a fishing boat might pop up seven miles away, faintly. The guy on the bridge will see it first before anyone inside the house. Even radar won't pick it up. That's a big deal right there.

0:45:59.7 Usually there are about 20 people on the ship, rarely over 25. He runs into the same people over the years. When you go to the union hall looking for work, sometimes you'll see someone you've seen before. But on a ship, you make friends with the nice guys. There are some abject jerks. Seattle tends to have a nicer class of people. The Seattle guys are good workers, all easy-going. They have a really good reputation, he doesn't know why it is. Maybe the weather reminds them not to take things for granted.

0:47:17.9 Dave has a stateroom. Some ships, you have your own bathroom, some you have to share. Typically, there's a bed, a locker/closet, a sink to brush your teeth. A desk. If it's a nice enough ship, usually you try to get televisions. Any profits coming out of the ship's "slop chest,"

which is like a convenience store, they contribute to the entertainment fund. You can buy movies or some rooms don't have TVs, so you get a TV. Or you rent a TV. But they try to make sure there's a TV or DVD player in each room. Or they may take the time to run cable throughout the ship so that there's a network server. Some Matson ships have a network server so that you can select movies that you want to watch, it's your own shipboard Netflix. The Matson ships, except the ones going through Seattle, are like that. He was on a Matson ship in July, it was like that. Satellite TV, so that when you're close to the coast you can watch whatever is happening in the news, or watch local programming.

0:49:27.6 What usually happens is that the ship has a crew computer, the radio operator or captain will set you up with an email. You use that to contact people at home, and they have your shipboard email address to keep in touch with you. There's talk about live internet access, but he hasn't been on a ship that's had that yet. It'll be interesting to see that happens.

0:50:31.2 When Dave isn't on watch, during the eight hours in between, usually he'll be working overtime. During the four hours during daylight, if he's on the 8-12 watch, from 1-5 he'll be on deck, doing maintenance work. Getting overtime. That's the general thing to do. Some people don't like doing overtime, it's all voluntary. If it's maintenance, docking or undocking, something mandatory, it's all hands.

0:51:11.4 Dave gets time and a half or more for the overtime. It's all negotiated. You have to work overtime if you want to make any money at all. If you work overtime, you basically double your salary, more than that, usually. That's where the real money's at. Some people put it off until they get close to going home, then say they better start working some. But often it's toward the end of the voyage that the mate starts cutting back on the overtime in order to make the budget. Those guys lose out. So Dave works overtime all the time. For his own entertainment, during coffee breaks, lunchtime, meal hours or before he goes to sleep, he reads books. Maybe might watch a movie. Usually brings a musical instrument to dink around with, whatever he can bring with him.

0:52:34.7 Dave has taken books with him, sometimes the ship has a library. But that's hit or miss. He won't spend time reading a Clive Cussler novel, adventure stuff, or something that has to do with ships. He doesn't want to think about ships when he's on a ship. He won't go see the Titanic movie, for instance. Or Perfect Storm! He likes literature, some poetry. He tries to learn songs, practice that.

0:53:36.7 His wife got him a Kindle, e-book reader. He gave it a try and was pleased. Also on his computer he has bunches of podcasts. When he's working, like chipping rust or painting when he's by himself, he plugs in the headphones. Has his iPod, listens to podcasts. At nighttime he might watch the NPR tiny-desk concerts. Or History of Rome, he's working on that series. It's long. When he's on the ship, that's when he reads novels. Has a handful of books he's got on his Kindle that he saves for then.

0:54:56.7 Food on board: what's served is in the union contract. So many days a week you have to have prime rib or steak offered. On Fridays, you have seafood options. It's like the traditional American diet, meat-heavy. That's not Dave's bag. He's half-Japanese, and he likes noodles and rice. He has more in common with the cooks from Yemen, a nice spicy rice dish is great! But meat and potatoes, not so good. Oh, fried rice, great! I'll take two bowls of that! He likes eating Asian food. Likes going to Singapore for food. He gets excited about that. Or Little India Town to get something to eat there. If he'll be going to Sardinia, he'll hit a restaurant, get a nice plate of Italian food, with seafood. Likes squid with black-ink sauce. Likes culinary traveling.

0:56:49.2 In the merchant marine, only Matson and APL lines still keep up the tradition of allowing crew to get beer or wine on ship. But on the bridge, the door says, "If you're under the influence of alcohol, you will be fired." That's good--anybody that stupid deserves to be fired. Can't drink and be on the bridge. It's that you get stupid. That's not common sense.

0:57:51.6 You can't be drunk. They have the beer and wine. Just have a little bit, because at any moment an emergency can happen and you want to be able to function. The union has kept that, hasn't violated the trust. So you can get a little bit of beer or wine. With so few people on board, everyone would know if you're drinking too much. People are responsible, and that's a nice thing to see.

0:58:51.7 He was seasick only when he first started sailing. Maybe less than five times he's been seasick, only puked once. That was when he worked for NOAA, the smaller ships. The ships these days are so big, you don't get seasick. That kind of movement, pitching motion from small ships like NOAA, he paid his dues. That'll get you seasick. But as far as like queasiness, disorientation, he first worked on seafood processor and on MacArthur, which was only 175 feet long ship--there are boats bigger than that! Crossing the Columbia River Bar one time, and leaving San Francisco, there were pretty big swells outside. Those were the only two times working for NOAA that he got queasy. The one time he got sick was on the Fairweather, heading back from Alaska. Doing the Alaska Spill Assessment in 1989 after the Valdez Spill in 1988. They took scientists around to do the preliminary investigation. They were coming back, hit a storm and down to three knots, pitching a lot. That was the one time. He'd just had lunch, had a full stomach, going to the bridge. Breathed through his nose, used his diaphragm, couldn't keep it down. Threw up, then it was fine. Every watch lost at least one or two people. Only his watch made it through the four hours without losing anybody. Seasickness happens. Sometimes a gentle rolling motion is enough to make someone seasick.

1:01:36.5 Sea legs: Dave's theory is that the ships are big enough that it's not difficult to get acclimated. When he was on the seafood processor, he wore a scopalumine patch. His dad told him to be careful and stay prepared. "You don't want to find yourself being seasick," cause his dad had problems with seasickness. So Dave made a point of wearing the patch. One or two times he felt queasy. He just stayed in bed when he wasn't working. But one guy and gal, they were puking every day. Constantly sick. But after a week, the guy was fine. Nothing would faze him after he got over it, but at first they thought he was going to die. He was so pale they called him "Casper, the Unhappy Ghost."

1:03:08.7 The worst thing about getting off a ship is not your body, it's your head. It's a different culture, different attitude about work. Dave tends to be impatient about stuff because he's used to working. If there's something he wants to do and something else gets in the way, he gets hot under the collar. The whole culture of work, your expectations are different. He's aware of that after all these years of sailing, so he just bites it back and thinks more broadly about the situation. It takes him a while before he's able to "not" be in a state of terminal anticipation, hyper-alertness. Cause you're on a ship, you're walking on deck, you notice that the seas are getting bad and you need to get below. Or this is a dangerous place to be, get outta here. Have situational awareness. Always being "on" like that affects you when you get home. Average person isn't like that. The only time he finds himself dropping that mindset is when he's driving. He gets stressed out. He's watching every car around him, and knows where they all are. He's never surprised, even when someone is acting a little odd. He can see the variance in behavior, gives them some space.

Or the worst--he got off the ship when he was with NOAA. Typically they'd arrive a few weeks before Christmas. The ships would come in to Seattle for the holidays, used to be. Now they're in Newport, Oregon. So he got off the ship, and he was sharing a house with friends. His friend invited him downtown to the Westlake Mall. They drove, found parking, went into the mall. And there were people EVERYWHERE. He happened to see a shipmate, George, in the crowd. He had a shell-shocked look on his face. Eyes were big, blank expression. Looked like he just got hit by a prizefighter and was trying to figure out what happened. He couldn't carry on a conversation. Dave looked around at all the lines, all the people, told his roommate that he couldn't do it. Dave noticed his eyes were sore.

They went to the 211 Pool Hall in Belltown, and that was better. He was looking at the green felt, it was calming to his eyes. When he was leaving he figured out that his eyes were sore because he was looking at every single person on the sidewalk as they were going through downtown. His eyes were going "BINGA-A-DINGA-DING DING DING." He was instinctively looking at every single person. He was so over-stimulated, he wasn't used to be out in public. On a ship, you have 20 some-odd people. With big NOAA ships, you could have a full complement of scientists, maybe 100.

1:07:53.3 He was on Discover that winter, doing an equatorial Pacific Ocean Current Buoy thing, recovering and redeploying buoys around the equator that were monitoring the El Nino weather effects. That's where they all start, around the equator. To help predict upcoming larger weather patterns by monitoring what's happening at the moment. So that's what they were doing with the buoys down there. But coming off that ship, was WOW! All the people, and getting eyestrain. That was bizarre, but it wasn't unusual. The last ship he was on was a Matson ship, the Pineapple Run. Got the job in Honolulu, went to Oakland, to Long Beach, back to Honolulu. Nice 14-day trip. Honolulu was his home port because that's where he joined the ship. He could go ashore, which does a lot for you. It's easier to make the transition. But if you've been gone for several months, only around your crew?

One time he was in Peru, in a cab, a couple of sailors were together. They were going to the Minneapolis Club in Peru. All looking around and dead silent. No one saying anything. Dave realized they'd been on the ship TOO long. The last time they'd been in port was a month before. So just even a month without being on land can dramatically affect your mind. That whole side of working on ships is hard. It's like going to prison and coming out of prison. The founder of Dave's union made a comment, when it was first being formed. Said the only difference between going to sea and being in prison, "my room is no bigger than a prison cell. And the food I get is no better. And in addition to that, there's a chance of drowning. That's the difference between being on ship and being in prison." That was back when sailors had no right.

Furusetth, the ocean-going equivalent of Harry Bridges of the ILWU, was fighting for the rights, the human rights, of laborers, the workers on the ship. They didn't have anything back then. A bucko mate could treat you like shit with impunity and that kind of behavior still exists now. You had no rights back then, late 1800s.

1:12:19.7 He joined the Sailors' Union of the Pacific (SUP) in 2000, just recently got his full seniority. The SUP has quite the history and they're really proud of it. Harry Lundberg was one of the earlier presidents. He did an awful lot to expand their rights. The early founders of the SUP did an awful lot towards making sure that the sailors were able to maintain the hiring hall-- have control of the hiring instead of the companies. That ensured there wasn't favoritism. The SUP under Lundberg and Furusetth, a lot of inroads in hiring through their own halls. Providing the best, most civilized terms for labor.

1:13:51.4 If Dave were on a Matson ship leaving Seattle, he'd have all kinds of stuff with him as what he packed to travel. But he's going on a fly-out job. So he's bringing a laptop that has a lot of music, iTunes, on the computer. He has lyrics and chords so he can learn those if he brings his guitar. He might bring a ukulele or a mandolin. Clothing: rain gear, work boots. Dave wears steel-toed boots because anything can drop on your foot. Good grips. He likes Doc Martens because he's walking on steel decks all day long, and he's been on ships in the past where his legs and knees were killing him after a month or so. So Doc Martens were the first work boots that he didn't have that problem. He's tried all different brands. Doc Martens have a cushier, nonstick sole. They cost a bit, but he'll stick with them because they're the only ones that work for him. He brings a set of rain gear, heavy-duty Helly Hansens or Grundens, tough ones for when they do wash-downs or for heavy rainstorms. In Singapore, you're better off without raingear because it's so warm. Just get wet. He brings bib coveralls, Carharts are durable and popular.

Since he's going to the East Coast and it's winter there, gets really cold, he'll bring insulated coveralls. Especially if you're on bow lookout coming into New York Harbor or New Jersey, it takes several hours, and if you're on the bow you're freezing your buns off. That's a big deal. It's a drag because the only time you need something that heavy-duty is when you go in and out of that port. Everywhere else is not that bad, just for one port. That's a lot of bulk to cram into your sea bags for one port. He'll bring a hand coffee grinder, some nice coffee beans, and a little French press that work swell for travel. Once you're out there, where are you going to find

good coffee on the East Coast? Especially if you don't know where your resources are. Dave can't handle typical ship coffee. Matson wasn't so bad--they provided coffee from Hawaii. That was better than the average coffee you find on ship. But if you go into Honolulu, you can buy Kona coffee anytime you want, a lovely thing!

1:18:33.3 When Dave started with NOAA, other than the basic stuff his dad showed him, he wasn't a deckhand. The first time he was a deckhand, one AB told him, "Watch what I'm doing and back me up." Fortunately, Dave has good instincts and he watched him and backed him up. He fell into rhythm behind him. He told Dave what to do, exactly the way he wanted it. Dave learned from following examples. The two ABs he worked with are really knowledgeable. Bob Daniels, used to be a fisherman with one of the local Native tribes. A great boat handler. Dave would watch Bob, really think about what Bob was doing and how he pulled it off, think about Bob's technique. Then made it a part of his own technique. Dave would watch Roger Hansen, the bosun on the crew on the MacArthur. He'd watch how Roger used a paintbrush. Roger had a way of laying down paint so that it would come out like gloss. No brush marks, just perfect. One day, Dave said, "How do you do that? It's perfect!" Roger told him to watch the motion, how he was doing it, Roger explained more. Did such nice work.

Dave really admired the guys who had great skills. He's not sure if people these days have the personal sense of investment or curiosity that Dave had. Even now, he'll see someone using a different knot, and Dave will realize it's a better knot to use in that situation and he'll begin using that knot instead because it's simpler, stronger, one you can untie that won't come undone under pressure. But people are complacent. Maybe because nowadays you can't just go on a ship like he did, totally green. You have to take Coast Guard classes, have certifications, or the Captain signs off. The ordinaries, it's more of an investment in their being able to stand a wheel watch than actually doing the maintenance work or the dirty work on deck. Knowing your knots, knowing how to splice line. These newer lines, Kevlar lines, are braided. It's more than just three-strand stuff that rope had been made of. Or Sampson line. All those kinds of different things. Even then, a lot of the companies don't want the sailors do that work. They'd rather send it to the company and have them redo a cable. They don't splice wire cable anymore, he guesses for liability reasons. Dave thinks it'd be a surprise nowadays if you met a sailor who could splice a wire cable. Then, of course, they're using the Kevlar braided line and Sampson line, great products. Really strong, easy to handle. You could splice it like a regular line. But there are ships that use cable. There could be times when you might need to splice cable. The knowledge seems to be disappearing. Maybe it's because less is asked. But the people who are the newer people sailing, the younger guys, they don't seem to have as much of a desire to find out. The curiosity level. Or maybe Dave's just exceptional!

1:23:52.0 Aesthetics: The bosun is the final arbiter of being on deck. Sometimes, it's a funny thing when you say "aesthetics." I've told people, if it looks good, it IS good. If you're painting, and it comes out nicely, it takes a bit of work to make it come out nice. If you're laying down mooring lines on deck before setting out the chocks for docking and tying up, you should lay down the lines in a certain way so that, when they run across the deck, they're not going to get tangled up. Some people call it "flaking" or "faking" down the line. If you do it in a way that's

orderly and neat, it'll work well. But if it's haphazard, the line will start snaking around and fishtailing. Runs the risk of a loop snaking out to one side and grabbing someone around the ankles or hitting them, bruising them, breaking a limb.

One of the big deals about his work boots, he doesn't like hooks where the laces go, he likes eyelets. A mooring line racing across the deck might reach out and grab a person by those lace hooks, pull 'em off their feet and drag them off the deck. Dave has always been worried about that. And sure enough, he came across a safety report where some guy got dragged to the chock, which is an opening where the mooring lines go out between the bulwarks and outside the ship. He got dragged to the chock and it tore his leg off. Dave doesn't know if he died, but he remembers reading it in the safety report. Sounded like it might have happened during an offshore mooring operation, like a tanker at Barbour's Point off Hawaii or El Segundo, off of the Santa Monica, Redondo Beach area. There's a boat that takes mooring line, runs out to the buoys. But when it's running out to the buoys, to tie up, this line is racing across the deck. If someone had had the line poorly faked, it could happen. And sure enough! Dang! It DID happen. That's why he's particular about his choice of work boots.

1:26:58.7 There is an art to seamanship. Fancy work or decorative knot work, which no one really does anymore. Less time to do that, the length of an ocean voyage is way shorter. Ships can be very fast. But in the wheelhouse, if there's enough time, maybe the quartermaster may spend a little time doing a bit of fancy work on the steering wheel of the ship. Some ships have it, sometimes no one ever bothers. Some ships get bad reputations, you look around and see that there's no love being applied around there.

1:28:25.3 "Don't turn your back to the sea" is a saying. You might be having a conversation with someone, they have the back to the sea, leaning on a railing. Don't do that! You're not watching the ocean and might fall over backwards. Or maybe your hands won't be available to hold on. "One hand for the ship, one hand for yourself" when going up a ladder. Always keep a hand on the railing. Not ever going up or down the stairs or ladder when you don't have a hand holding on.

1:29:22.3 There are a few women on the ships. Little incentive for a woman to work on a ship. Dave's union, if a woman comes looking for work, she's not discouraged. But a kook is a kook. They've gotten some applicants that he doesn't understand how they got into the union. Some old timers would point and say, "I don't know why that guy ever got in the union!" Or some sexist remark, "I can't believe that port agent would let that woman in here." But a lousy worker is a lousy worker, a good worker is a good worker. Gender or race, it doesn't matter.

1:31:46.3 Sea stories are cool because they offer object lessons. He took a maritime tech class that Seattle Central offered. When he went, it was the early days. One guy taught introduction to basic deck equipment, machinery, windlasses, etc. Some elements of marine firefighting because the instructor was an international damage control consultant. The instructor said, "In this school, you'll learn about 10 percent of anything you're ever going to learn through your career. About 30 percent will be something that you learn on the job. But 60 percent will be

something you learned from a sea story that someone told you. It'll be really important." Like that one thing about losing power on the Truman. What was the point? When you're switching power from one generator to another generator, there's a relay that can fail. That was the object lesson that came out of that sea story. Then there's the one about coming ashore. Dave's sea stories tend to be long. Always starts with one little thing, then gets bigger and bigger, then settles back down and resolves.

1:34:06.1 When Dave was with NOAA, they were going to the Galapagos Islands for an over-nighter. He thought he'd take his bike and truck around the island. He had his backpack, his camera in it. He was stoked. They first go to a bar, were sitting around having a few drinks. At one point, he went out back to look for his bike, and it was gone. He came back inside for his backpack, and it was gone. What's going on? So he looked around, thinking maybe he'd find it. So Dave ended up talking with one of the scientists who could speak Spanish, talked with the bartender where Dave was first. Told him it was a missing bicycle. The scientist came back out with a piece of paper that had "Sol de Mar" on it with a number. Dave didn't know what that was. He stuck the piece of paper in his pocket. He gave up, wasn't going to shake down the island to find his stuff. He went barhopping. He ended up getting really, really drunk. He was falling-down drunk.

He found out much later that what many of the bars in the Galapagos do is, it costs so much to ship booze over there, if the seal is broken or it's a local booze, they'll pour off some of the booze and refill it with quinine. Quinine is great for malaria treatment. But it's toxic. And if you drink enough, you think you're getting drunk but you're getting poisoned. So it was really bad. Dave was losing it. At one point he remembers stumbling into a small barn. Then the next morning, he wakes up, he's in a hotel. He remembers hearing voices, he's on a bed, his glasses are off. He recognizes the voices as two of his shipmates. He reached under the bed on the floor, there were his glasses. He's in a hotel room with a bunch of beds or bunks. It's almost like a hostel. He looks across the room, and there's his bike. "Wow!" And there's his backpack with his camera. It was pretty weird.

So he was with the guys, and they decided to get something to eat because they were all hung over. As they were leaving the restaurant, the hotel, he noticed that the name of the place was "Sol de Mar." He remembers that piece of paper, goes back to his room to get it, and that was the room number that he was in. Apparently, he'd asked the guys about his bike. They said it was there when he came back. They never figured out how his bike and backpack ended up in the room. The crew had originally gotten another room. His two crewmates had found Dave and the chief crew tech sitting next to each other on the corner of the street, blotto, and they got the crew tech back to his hotel and took Dave to their room. That's how he got to that room. That's a sea story.

1:39:55.6 Dave likes going to new places, that opportunity is great. He looks forward to that. He looks forward to exploring a port he hasn't explored too much before. He likes the adventure of the job. He likes the money, and he likes the time off. Any job that you can put in a full year's amount of time and still have the time off where you're just not working, that's good. Dave likes

to play music, he has guitars and a mandolin and ukuleles. What's a drag is to have to fly out to the East Coast and not be able to take one of his good guitars with him. He likes to take his Martin Shenandoah with him. Not like taking a D-28 or D-35 Martin.

1:41:39.4 Dave likes the water, always has, even as a child. His dad, when he asked what Dave wanted to do for his birthday, Dave wanted to go fishing. More than once he almost drowned as a child. He has a respect for the water, he can swim. He can't imagine not living near a port city. Something about the whole culture of ports.

1:42:23.5 The Beatles said that if it wasn't for all the sailors bringing in the music to Liverpool, a port city, they never would have heard that music. Sailors are cultural cross-pollinators. Bring good things from overseas, tell people about it. Food culture. Textile cultures. South America! He learned that from his mother, who loves sewing and textiles. Go to Latin America, some great textile cultures there. He loves those experiences, seeing what people do with their hands. You get to experience that sailing. You get to see things. It's not like you're in a tour group. In Peru, when he went to Cuzco, he went to the San Jose market by the train station. He could pick out the stuff meant for the tourists, but he dug around more and found the real deal. He appreciates that. (Describes kinds of things he finds) "You see culture in the handiwork." The time someone put into making something. When you're travelling, you're not rushed. These days you are, but sometimes you get the opportunity to see the good stuff. And that is such a rewarding experience.

In Japan, the temples are cool. But sometimes going to a place selling tea, you might see a piece of ceramic that some artist made that's so exquisite, it's mind-numbingly awesome. Or regular kitchenware stuff, get chopsticks and bowls. Everyday stuff that people use. You can find little treasures. (Describes aesthetic elements of pieces.) Every culture has something valuable that has an everyday beauty that people are doing and making. It's great. Before Dave started sailing, he encountered some sailors who had gone to Indonesia and returned with some beautiful batiks. He thought that was neat. They found a guy who made batiks, brought him a few beers. Got him all boozed up, which was a luxury for that guy. They bought some batiks he'd been working on. But they sparked up a relationship with that guy. That was when a ship would be in port for over a week, doing what was called "break bulk" cargo, palletized instead of in containers. That was at the end of palletized cargo when he met those guys. That doesn't happen anymore.

1:47:01.9 Dave will probably continue in this job. He's 52 now, he can see himself doing it in his 60s. See how long his body hangs in there. He needs to make his retirement, get his pension through the union.

1:47:57.7 Dave had no grandparents--they died before he was born. His last name shouldn't be Eriksen, should have been Dallerup. Eriksen was a cousin of his grandfather. He used his cousin to say, I have a brother in America. So he was able to be allowed in. The reason why Karl Eriksen came to America, he was a bastard child. His mother was the daughter of an innkeeper. A lot of sailors stayed there. Evidently some sailor got the daughter pregnant. So she had an

illegitimate child. Karl Eriksen wasn't treated well because he was the bastard. He was told, "You have some cousins in America. You should go over there and find some work." He was shooed off to America. He was the son of a sailor. Dave's dad, after his father died, ended up joining the Navy. So Dave is the third person in the lineage who continued going to sea. He likes it, he likes the work. He likes the people he works with.

Sailors are an interesting bunch. In his union they have guys who are second, third generation sailors. Then there are people who went to college, didn't want to do 9 to 5, found out about working on ships, and started doing it. The president of his union, Gunnar Lundberg, has a degree in labor studies. The vice president has a degree in English. They have educated people in his union. His union agent, Vince O'Halloran, is a great guy. He bends over backwards to help out people. He has relationships with the King County Labor Council, with the local senators. Those policies affect workers, and it's important. You have to take account of the big picture. It's important for them to have a relationship with the politicians.

1:51:33.1 Post 9/11, the whole thing about port security. What did Patty Murray do? All the different Congress people went home, and if their state had ports, talked with their constituents. In Seattle, the sailors came up with a set of solutions early. A coalition of shipping companies, the docks, the laborers, maritime, top and bottom, left and right. Everyone got involved--Coast Guard. A lot of ideas floated out. Some ideas didn't have anything to do with port security, such as no one with an arrest record should be allowed in the port area. That's crazy, if there's a strike with guys out by the gate who get arrested, they couldn't work. Because of an arrest record--not a conviction. You exclude all those people from working. They shot that down in a nice way. Everyone worked together on the task force, even the cruise line companies. They came up with a plan, Patty Murray got it. It was presented to Congress and the Administration. Other ports just didn't have it, he thinks, because they didn't bring everybody to the table. You need to have eyes on the docks if you want port security. The longshoremen are the eyes on the dock as well as the people on the ships. They can keep good security. That's part of things that happen in ports and on the ships, labor can't be left out of the loop. They have a role. If they're shunted aside, then why? For power or control? That's his political soapbox! END