Interview: Roger Stonebanks (RS)
Interviewer: Rod Mickleburgh (RM)
Also: Helen Ayers (HA). Natasha Fairweather (NF)
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Transcription: Warren Caragata

RM [00:00:05] So I'm very pleased to have with us Brother Roger Stonebanks. And a lot of people in the labour movement forget that the media that they all rail about is often organized too and part of the labour movement. And Roger was very much a part of The Newspaper Guild in Victoria. Plus, he was a labour reporter, as I was. So there's lots talk about it. But first, Roger, of course, we'll—as a good reporter—we'll go back to the early days and talk about how you got into the business and your background, I assume it's in England.

RS [00:00:41] My background is in England, and I got into the business—I decided when I was 12 years old I wanted to be a reporter.

RM [00:00:49] Where were you?

RS [00:00:50] In London.

RM [00:00:50] Oh, in London? Okay.

RS [00:00:51] Suburban London. And at 16, I began. But that was a whole accident how that happened, because—I'll try to cut the story short because—

RM [00:01:06] Well, if it's a good story, go for it.

RS [00:01:07] Okay? My mother and I were going to visit her mother, as one does. And, so she was reading the paper and she was looking at the help-wanted ads. And I said, I didn't know you were looking for another job. And she said, I am not looking for a job for me. I'm looking for a job for you. And this is what mothers do, apparently. And there was a column and in this column where they said it was from Associated Press on Farringdon Street, which is just a few feet, a few yards, off Fleet Street, and they were looking for a copyboys, called office boys, only boys and no girls then. And so, she said, why don't you apply for that? I said, well, you know, I've got a job at the local mill. It's okay. I don't need this job. I'm waiting for a job at the local paper. You know. Why? And she said, no, you'd learn something just by being there. Of course. You know, mothers are always right. So, okay Mum. And so I after we visited granny, I wrote a letter and I got a letter back from Associated Press saying, thanks very much, very interested in your application, but all the positions were filled by the time we got your application, and that was that. So I thought, nothing ventured, nothing lost. But actually, something was gained because Canadian Press had an office in the same building. In those days, Canadian Press had a bureau in London with five employees. Now it has nothing. So I get a letter from Canadian Press saying, we've seen your letter applying for a copyboy job at the Associated Press, and we're interested in something similar. We have a position here which is part copyboy and part junior reporter. Click. And then the letter went on to say, previous boys in this position who have shown sufficient promise have been given the opportunity to transfer to Canada. So I thought, whoopie doopie, this is another lovely surprise drops right into my lap. Offer of a starting job in journalism on Fleet Street with the prospect of going to Canada.

RS [00:03:42] Here I am.

RM [00:03:42] And so how long did you work for Canadian Press there?

RS [00:03:46] I worked for three years for CP in London, and I went to Montreal for about two years, then went to Toronto for about two years. I went to Vancouver for a few months. I went to Victoria for a year and a half. And then I left them in 1964 for the Victoria Daily Times, where I remained.

RM [00:04:10] So why did you—working on newspapers all these different—so why did you keep leaving these places?

RS [00:04:20] Well, I left London because it was a promotion, you know, to get my real start in journalism in Montreal. I moved to Toronto because at the request of Canadian Press, they were expanding their photo department.

RM [00:04:36] Well, this is all still with Canadian Press.

RS [00:04:38] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:04:39] Sorry. Of course, yeah.

RS [00:04:43] And, yeah, CP wanted me to move to Toronto, so I said, right, you know, you do your thing. And then I quit. I actually quit them in Toronto. I wanted to go to Vancouver. And they said, well (this is getting a bit long) they said, no, we don't have any vacancies in Vancouver. But we do have vacancies in Winnipeg and Edmonton. So I quickly said, no, thank you very much and I quit. No, it's Vancouver with no job at all. And now I go to Vancouver. I made the obligatory phone call, and it turned out that some fellow there had just had a heart attack. And they said, would you like to fill in for him. I said, well, of course. He never recovered from his heart attack, I don't think.

RM [00:05:36] Who hired you? Do you remember? At the Sun? Was it at the Sun?

RS [00:05:38] No, it was at the CP in Vancouver.

RM [00:05:42] Oh, CP Vancouver.

RS [00:05:43] And I was hired by—I can't remember who it was now. It was the person before Phil Adler.

RM [00:05:53] Phil Adler.

RS [00:05:54] Yeah.

RM [00:05:55] All right. Anyway.

RS [00:05:57] And, anyway, we're reminiscing long enough. So I got a job. I got hired on to take this guy's place, 'cause he was ill. And then they said to me, we now have a vacancy in Victoria. I didn't want to go to Victoria. I wanted to stay in Vancouver. So I'd just been hired back. So I thought, politically, I'd better say yes.

RM [00:06:25] Yeah, I know that feeling.

RS [00:06:27] So I said, okay, I'll go to Victoria. After a year and a half—I didn't get tired of Victoria, but I got tired of Canadian Press and I got tired of their pay. So I quit Canadian Press, which was nonunion at that time, for The Victoria Daily Times, which was union at that time. And I went up from about 90 or so dollars to about $102 which is quite—percentage rise is quite a—

RM [00:06:59] Yeah.

RS [00:07:00] And that's the story.

RM [00:07:02] $102 a week?

RS [00:07:03] A week. Oh yes. Yes. Everything's per week.

RM [00:07:06] Oh, it seems such a pittance now. And what year was this you started at The Victoria Times?

RS [00:07:16] Yes.

RM [00:07:16] What year?

RS [00:07:17] 1964.

RM [00:07:18] Okay. And, eventually, at some point, did you not become a labour reporter?

RS [00:07:23] In 1964.

RM [00:07:25] Oh, right off the bat.

RS [00:07:25] Right off the bat. I was always interested in history at school, and I became interested in the labour part of it because of a problem I had with salary at Canadian Press. So, I was interested in having, you know, a proper arrangement where everybody got paid according to their experience, fairly, which we did.

RM [00:07:55] Were you from a labour family?

RS [00:07:57] No.

RM [00:07:58] Like Labour, in the political party, I was thinking.

RS [00:08:00] No, no.

RM [00:08:02] You weren't someone with the British disease of unions.

RS [00:08:06] Well, I don't like that expression, but I know what you mean. No, no, no. I came from a very conservative family.

RM [00:08:14] And so when you started labour reporting, what did you like about it? Well, tell me about it. What was it like in the mid-sixties?

RS [00:08:21] Well, I covered labour in 1964. First, I covered labour in several periods. But the first period was the interesting one, 1964 to 1970. And in those days, labour in British Columbia was very confrontational, and from a reporter's point of view, very exciting. Lots of stuff to write about. Lots of conflict, drama, and it was a lot more—Well, I don't know what it's like today because you don't see anything today, but maybe there isn't anything to see today, but, there are no labour reporters anymore anyway, so you and I are history there. I found it very exciting and dramatic and but very confrontational, that's for sure.

RM [00:09:18] Well, there were such colourful figures, too.

RS [00:09:20] Oh, gosh, yes. Oh, yeah. And yes, there was a lot of drama. Some of it was engineered, but there was plenty of drama. Real drama.

RM [00:09:30] One of the things when I was writing my labour history book, I came across some of your articles about, before the BCGEU became a union. So, of course, this was a big—in Victoria, the B.C. Government Employees' Association. So what was that like in those days?

RS [00:09:49] Well, I forget—how did I describe it?

RM [00:09:55] Something like, it's more like a debating society and winning, you know, the free trip to the old country.

RS [00:10:00] And trips to the old country, yeah.

RM [00:10:05] Rather than—

RS [00:10:06] You know, it wasn't really a union. But that wasn't their fault. I mean, they tried, not very hard in my view, but they did try. But the government was very anti-union.

RM [00:10:20] W.A.C. Bennett.

RS [00:10:20] Oh, god. Yes.

RM [00:10:23] Well, you could talk about him.

RS [00:10:25] Oh, he was very anti-union. Straight out.

RM [00:10:29] They didn't even have negotiations.

RS [00:10:31] And they were not allowed to support the NDP financially. That was prohibited. Bill 42 or Bill 43? A lot of people forget these things.

RM [00:10:44] Yeah.

RS [00:10:44] I remember them.

RM [00:10:46] Do you remember any particular confrontations that were big stories when you were a labour reporter, do you really remember covering?

RS [00:10:53] Forest industry was always—

RM [00:10:55] IWA.

RS [00:10:57] IWA. That was the regular one. And of course it was big in those days. The coast section of the IWA alone was 25,000 members. And then they had northern Interior, southern Interior. And the Victoria local, which doesn't exist anymore, had about 2,000 members. Had mills here, all gone now.

RM [00:11:29] Were you conscious as a labour reporter that you were sort of, you know, telling the story of working people, you know, aspiring for something better?

RS [00:11:39] Yes, in a sense. But the immediate thing was what was going on. You know, there was a strike. There were people out, work not being done. There might be strikebreakers. That was the immediate thing.

RM [00:11:55] So why did you call them strikebreakers and not replacement workers?

RS [00:11:58] Never.

RM [00:11:59] Never. Exactly. Old labour reporters know that. Even unions now use the term replacement workers. I mean, they're strikebreakers.

RS [00:12:07] Terrible, terrible.

RM [00:12:08] Yeah.

RS [00:12:09] Well, I could have said scabs, but—

RM [00:12:11] Well, you can say scabs, but, you know, strikebreakers still is fine.

RS [00:12:15] Yeah. Thank you.

RM [00:12:16] Because they break strikes.

RS [00:12:18] Exactly.

RM [00:12:19] Yeah. And you enjoyed being a labour reporter?

RS [00:12:22] I did, it was good.

RM [00:12:24] And why did you stop?

RS [00:12:27] Well, there's a little story there. It turns out I got involved in the union, in The Newspaper Guild, quite heavily. And, so I was doing these two things, I was being labour reporter over here, union activist over here. And there was a management person. He was the company lawyer, Edwin Pearlman, who did not like that. And he did not like—I am not sure whether he personally disliked me. It doesn't really matter whether he did or he didn't, but he put some pressure on, I won't name him, but he put some pressure on somebody in editorial management that I was perhaps not the right person to be covering labour because of my activity, which the two had nothing to do with each other. I never wrote a word about The Newspaper Guild. I refused to. Sometimes they would like me to write stories about the newspaper. I said, no, no, no, no, you got to find somebody else to do

that. That's a conflict. Anyway, so that came to an end, to that period. But later on, when times changed, I came back as a labour reporter two further times, for shorter periods. But—

RM [00:14:00] You know, that's interesting because that I faced the same thing as a labour reporter. You know, in my early years, I didn't really get involved in the guild. And then at some point I did, and people would say, oh, you're biased as a labour reporter. And I said, not at all. No, because my answer was, much more articulate than yours, [laughter] was that I'm a member of The Newspaper Guild, whether I like it or not. It's part of my, you know, and so this has only to do with my work relationship with the company. Doesn't have anything to do with my views or anything. Of course, I like labour anyway. But I mean, it's totally, as you point out, totally separate, you know, and we know our jobs. Our jobs are to provide information fairly, you know, and this is only to deal with my employment relationship with the company. And I don't see why I shouldn't have a say in that.

RS [00:14:54] Absolutely. And you did and I did and lots of others did, so good for us.

RM [00:14:59] Yeah. But you did get involved in the union. And why did you decide to get involved in the union? This is The Newspaper Guild.

RS [00:15:05] Well, here's the story there. After a year at the Victoria Daily Times, I thought it's time for a raise. You know, a merit raise. Merit raises are allowed. So I went to the managing editor, and I said—I thought I'd approach him this way—I said, Do you think I'm an above average reporter? So what's the guys to say? He's got to say yes. So he says yes. So I said, fine. I said, I'm here to ask for an above-average pay. I said, I'm not looking for much, maybe $5, $10 over the weekly. And his answer was, I couldn't do that, you know. He said if I did it for you, then I have to do it for others. And anyway, he said, around here the guild does the negotiating. Click. Well, that turned me on to working for the union. Thank you Management. Always do it.

RM [00:16:14] Were you surprised to know there was a union there?

RS [00:16:16] No. I knew that.

RM [00:16:19] Was it a good union?

RS [00:16:21] It had gone to sleep as things happened. It had gone to sleep. It was a good union. Yeah. It started back in 1945, '46. One of the very early newspaper unions following the Vancouver Sun, Vancouver Province and the New Westminster Columbian. Everybody forgets the Columbian.

RM [00:16:44] Terry Glavin got his start there.

RS [00:16:46] Yes he did. This is getting to be an old-time reminiscence.

RM [00:16:52] Oh, no. They'll just edit this stuff out.

RS [00:16:54] No. Don't.

RM [00:16:55] So what was it like getting involved in the union? Well, how did you get involved? What did you do?

RS [00:16:59] Well. There were—let's see, at this point, I'm in my late 20s. So you know if you're in your late 20s, you're agitated? So a group of us decided, right, we're going to make this union a real union. So we got together and we won the election, our slate. And that's how it began.

RM [00:17:25] Were you president?

RS [00:17:26] Not initially, no, but I became president. I was president in 1969 and 1970.

RM [00:17:35] And what were the issues that you faced? And you took on?

RS [00:17:40] Money. Money first. Money was the big issue. People had been passed off with this sort of sweetie talk. There was a friendliness, but the friendliness didn't translate into tangible results. And so, money was a big issue and fairness was also an issue. There were practices that worked for some people but didn't work for other people. You might get your sick pay or you might not get your sick pay. All the contract said was the past policy of management in this regard shall continue, whatever that meant.

RM [00:18:29] Whoever agreed to that clause?

RS [00:18:31] Somebody did. But we changed it and we had it written. And you get forty weeks for each illness or incapacity, maximum pay for forty weeks. And that spelled it out very clearly. We got that in the strike of 1973.

RM [00:18:49] We'll get to that. So you were involved in negotiations. What was that like?

RS [00:18:54] Oh, I loved negotiating.

RM [00:18:55] Why?

RS [00:18:56] Because you start off with a clean slate. You got this blank sheet of paper, if you like, and then you fill it in. You achieve this, you fill that in, and you're creating something. That's what I thought. So it was something that you would absorb and receive personally. And so would everybody else. So I mean, we're all in it together.

RM [00:19:22] There's a skill involved in negotiating, isn't there?

RS [00:19:26] Yes, it's called power. That's what it's all about. I've got the power. You've got the power. If I've got the power, I'm going to get it.

RM [00:19:35] But at some point, you have to compromise. You can't get everything you want.

RS [00:19:39] Why not?

RM [00:19:40] Did you get everything you wanted?

RS [00:19:42] We got more than everything we wanted sometimes.

RM [00:19:45] But you know what I'm saying.

RS [00:19:46] Forty weeks sick leave was a lot more than we ever thought we'd get.

RM [00:19:49] Yeah. How did they ever agree to that?

RS [00:19:51] Because they were on their backs financially. And that brings me back to power. It's quite simple. And people don't like talking about power. It's not nice, not polite.

RM [00:20:05] By power, so you must have had the membership behind you.

RS [00:20:08] Absolutely.

RM [00:20:08] So it's a strong local.

RS [00:20:10] It was.

RM [00:20:11] Yeah. Okay, let's go to the strike in 1973. Were you president then?

RS [00:20:18] No, I was second vice president then, but I was chairperson of the negotiating committee. I was co-chair of the Victoria Joint Council of Newspaper Unions, which was essentially the bargaining body.

RM [00:20:33] Yeah, we should talk about that. When you talk about the Joint Council—

RS [00:20:37] Yes.

RM [00:20:37] Talk about that.

RS [00:20:39] Joint council—there were five bargaining groups there. We had five contracts for 330 employees.

RM [00:20:48] I'm going to weep.

RS [00:20:49] Why?

RM [00:20:51] Three hundred and thirty employees.

RS [00:20:53] Yeah.

RM [00:20:53] Anyway. Keep going.

RS [00:20:54] Okay. So we had five bargaining units. And we always used to bargain separately. One union would go in, another would go in, and one would get some sort of settlement. And then, there might be a pattern set. That was the danger. If a pattern was set, it was set by somebody else without any influence by others. So we decided to follow the example set at the Vancouver Sun and Province, which had a joint council of unions before we did, and we copied its setup. And, that's how we got going, and we bargained everything very strongly and very collectively, the five of us.

RM [00:21:42] Because the craft unions have this reputation, like the print, the pressmen and the mailers and the, you know, the photo engravers, all these various crafts of being stronger in a sense, and tougher negotiators than the Guild might have been in the past.

RS [00:22:01] That's probably true. Yeah.

RM [00:22:04] I remember Len Guy, who was head of the former head of the Joint Council at Pacific Press, saying, you know, when we took over and formed a joint council, you know, reporters were wearing running shoes, you know. We brought them kicking and screaming to these higher wages.

RS [00:22:21] His favourite quote over here, when I say over here, I mean in Victoria, was, We'll drag them kicking and screaming into the 20th century.

RM [00:22:30] He was a legendary figure.

RS [00:22:32] He was. And a very misunderstood person too. People thought he was rather—

RM [00:22:42] —brusque.

RS [00:22:43] Oh, that would be a mild word. And he actually, he was very clever and very smart, and he could switch positions so quickly. I remember one time, management had sent a clue as to which way they wanted to go, which is positive for us. He spotted it. We didn't. I say we, you know, people like me didn't. And so he said to us, we're going to change our positions here. I want you to go away and come back with a fresh position. So we went away, came back with a fresh position, gave it to Len, and he said, that's no good. He said, that's not enough. You've got to cut it further. So here he is saying we've got to reduce our position more than we've reduced it already. And he's with us. But he was very good like that. He also believed very much in power. That's where I learned the power thing.

RM [00:23:43] Yeah. He was tough.

RS [00:23:44] Very.

RM [00:23:44] Yeah. And just for the record, Len Guy was a printer.

RS [00:23:50] Yes he was.

RM [00:23:50] In the ITU, very strong and powerful. He'd been a pilot during World War Two and head of the joint council at Pacific Press and so on. And then at a certain point he became president of the B.C. Federation of Labour.

RS [00:24:03] And right about the time our strike started.

RM [00:24:07] Yeah.

RS [00:24:07] In fact, within about one week, I think he was elected president of the B.C. Federation of Labour in the third week of November, 1973. And the strike began December 1st, 1973. But he even though he'd moved on to the B.C. Fed, he stayed with us throughout our strike and negotiated until May of 1974.

RM [00:24:36] He really cared, didn't he?

RS [00:24:37] Very much.

RM [00:24:38] Yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember—here we're reminiscing—but I remember complaining about the situation when he was Fed president about Pacific Press and he said, Oh, I didn't know that. I'll see what I can do. Yeah. Anyway, so what prompted the strike? What was that all about, oh, you said money.

RS [00:24:57] Well, money was always an issue, but the strike was about job security. Plain and simple, job security. It was job security in the face of technological change, was one issue and a companion job security issue, which primarily affected (if not only affected) the guild—subcontracting of work to others who would do the same work, but cheaper. So those were the two issues: jobs, but under one heading, job security.

RM [00:25:28] Am I right in thinking that those were more craft issues than reporter issues?

RS [00:25:34] The tech change one was, job security and pace of tech change certainly was, because it was a very punishing change that occurred over the next 20 or so years. And employment just shrank in the composing room.

RM [00:25:53] Yeah.

RS [00:25:54] We went from 134 to about ten. None of whom lost their jobs. It was all natural attrition. And that's because we said nobody is ever going to be replaced by a machine, period. And that was that. And we won.

RM [00:26:16] But the guild supported the strike.

RS [00:26:18] Oh, yes. But we had a companion job security issue, which was the subcontracting. A lot of guild work can be done by other people. Banks, for example, were offering to do the bookkeeping part of the newspaper operation in Victoria, and we were aware of that. And so we said no, no, everything that was now being done must continue to be done and cannot be farmed out.

RM [00:26:53] And was this both were they separate newspapers then, the Victoria Times and the Victoria Colonist?

RS [00:26:59] Yes. There were two newspapers produced in the same plant.

RM [00:27:03] Like Pacific Press.

RS [00:27:05] Slightly different because they had two employers. The Sun was one company and the Province was another company. In Victoria, the Times and the Colonist were one company, but they operated two departments, two editorial departments, to produce two different looking newspapers. But all the other departments were integrated.

RM [00:27:27] So when you went on strike, you hit both newspapers?

RS [00:27:30] Absolutely.

RM [00:27:31] So what was it like going out on strike?

RS [00:27:33] Exciting.

RM [00:27:35] Nervous?

RS [00:27:37] Oh, yes. I don't think—I certainly had never been on a strike before and I don't think any of the 330 of us had. There might have been an occasional person who had, perhaps somebody who experienced a strike elsewhere, but there would only be one or two. So it was a very exciting moment. And of course, at the same time that we launched a strike, we were also launching our strike newspaper. So we're going—we were accused of going into business for ourselves, which actually was true. And we made a fortune.

RM [00:28:17] Well, let's talk about a strike newspaper. I mean, that is very unusual. And I know it had happened at Pacific Press in Vancouver.

RS [00:28:27] Yes, it did.

RM [00:28:30] So what was that like? How did you organize it?

RS [00:28:34] It was organized chaos. The scene in the first few weeks at the Union Centre building in Victoria: here we were, we had one little office, the joint council office, which you might have three or four people able to work in it and that would be it. So what do we do? Well, we didn't do anything. First person to come and help us was Bob Milliken, business agent, Teamsters Local 31. He came to me because I knew him as labour reporter.

RM [00:29:12] Yes.

RS [00:29:13] And he came to me and he said, I know you need an office. He said, Here are the keys.

RM [00:29:19] Wow.

RS [00:29:20] He gave me the keys to his office. He said, I'm going to be away for December. Just like that. The B.C. Ferry and Marine Workers Union — his office by the way, The Teamsters office, became our city desk, if you like.

RM [00:29:39] Yeah.

RS [00:29:40] For want of any other word. So that was our newsroom if you like. Sort of. And then we had the B.C. Ferry and Marine Workers Union loaned us their office for our sports department. And so these two offers were really, really helpful. So, in we moved with our chairs, which we got from anywhere; typewriters, which we brought from home, paper which we brought from wherever we could steal it. And we went to work.

RM [00:30:20] So who printed it?

RS [00:30:24] The first couple of issues, two or three issues, were printed at—I forget the name of the company, it was a big downtown Vancouver commercial printing place, because we were in a hurry and we had to go somewhere that was set up. After that, we did it all ourselves. And the composing room was in Duncan, at the Duncan News Leader. We made an arrangement with Andy Bigg, who was the owner at that time. We sent our crew in at night where the place was empty and—

RM [00:31:12] With all the copy?

RS [00:31:13] Yeah. And they did the composing, right up to shooting the pictures for the engraving. And then we had to fly the engraving over to North Vancouver.

RM [00:31:31] Wow.

RS [00:31:38] To Horizon Publications, which was owned by—

RM [00:31:42] Hal Straight.

RS [00:31:43] And owned by David Radler.

RM [00:31:46] Oh, Radler, then.

RS [00:31:48] Yes.

RM [00:31:49] Oh my goodness.

RS [00:31:50] I'll tell you a little story about David Radler, too.

RM [00:31:55] Just to mention, David Radler later became notorious for a lot of different things. His role in Thompson Newspapers and then taking over the Sun and the Province and not widely—people weren't exactly enthusiastic about Mr. Radler. But anyway, keep going. He had his early beginnings—he was a guy with Conrad Black.

RS [00:32:17] He was partners with Conrad Black, exactly.

RM [00:32:21] Okay.

RS [00:32:21] Horizon Publications was David Radler's company.

RM [00:32:25] Yeah.

RS [00:32:26] And they had a printing press in North Vancouver, and we used their printing press after perhaps the third issue. We produced 73 issues altogether. After the third one, all of them were printed, including the one I left you, were printed at Horizon. So we would send our pressmen over to Vancouver to operate the press at night. And so we had their press and which meant, of course, their newsprint supply, which was vital. And of course, this was a business arrangement. You have to understand that these places aren't just giving us this free.

RM [00:33:13] You're paying them.

RS [00:33:15] Yeah, we're paying for it. So it's money in, money out. So that's where we printed it. Then the mailers would go over in their rented truck, three times a week and haul the finished product back to Victoria, 25,000 copies every issue. We never missed a deadline, either.

RM [00:33:42] This is amazing. I didn't realize the logistics of this.

RS [00:33:44] Of, the logistics were amazing. And I'm summarizing it.

RM [00:33:49] Yeah.

RS [00:33:52] But we settled into a pattern. The initial few weeks of organized chaos. But it was brilliant. You know, people were free to do what they could do. What we said to people was, just do your job and that's it. Everybody did their job under very difficult circumstances. Some people worked very long hours. It was nothing to work 25, 30, 35 hours straight. That's a long time. This is in the early days, and we settled into a pattern.

RM [00:34:32] And they got strike pay, though.

RS [00:34:34] Oh, yeah. Strike pay. And we got, we called it dividends. Express dividends. But it was very good for—let's see, for somebody like myself—reporters, I was making by about the second or third month of the strike, I was making about 75, 80 per cent of my normal net pay. So—

RM [00:35:05] Wow.

RS [00:35:06] —You can last quite a long time like that.

RM [00:35:08] And maybe tax free?

RS [00:35:11] That's a whole other issue. We had a 12-year battle with Revenue Canada about that.

RM [00:35:19] Because strike pay is supposed to be—

RS [00:35:21] You had the same thing.

RM [00:35:23] Well, I missed the strikes, but I think Jan O'Brien took it on at Pacific Press. But the issue was strike pay is non-taxable.

RS [00:35:35] Exactly.

RM [00:35:36] But you were making more than that because you're getting these dividends from the Express, and whether that should be taxed.

RS [00:35:46] Eventually we won in Vancouver and in Victoria. But in a sense we lost as well because they knew how to change the law to phrase it in a certain way, that that would be taxable if it was ever done again, which it never was.

RM [00:36:04] But I mean—

RS [00:36:05] But that's another side issue.

RM [00:36:07] So was the paper that you produced called the Victoria Express?

RS [00:36:11] Yes.

RM [00:36:12] And was it different because it was put out by strikers and unionists? Was it a pro-union paper? How did you approach that?

RS [00:36:21] It was not a union rag. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. That would have killed it. No. It was a straightforward newspaper, much like the regular papers here, much fuller of local news because we had two newsrooms to draw on. We had so many people to draw on that some of us had to go out and sell the paper, including me.

RM [00:36:47] And you got money for that, right?

RS [00:36:51] Five cents out of every 15. Yes. You sell a paper for 15 cents, right. Five cents was, like mine. So I sold the paper every Tuesday, every Thursday, every Tuesday, every Thursday, for four months.

RM [00:37:09] Stood on a street corner?

RS [00:37:11] Hillside Shopping Centre, the entrance. There was a reporter who sold the paper downtown. He sold 500 copies.

RM [00:37:19] And made a fortune.

RS [00:37:20] Well, I don't know [unclear].

RM [00:37:23] But people bought it, right?

RS [00:37:25] Oh, absolutely.

RM [00:37:26] It was popular.

RS [00:37:27] Yeah, yeah. Well, my favourite memory from the whole period was at the Hillside Shopping Centre on Tuesday morning, this chauffeur-driven Lincoln Continental would pull up. This is unusual, right? It was unusual then, it would be unusual now, I guess. And the chauffeur would step out, open the door for her ladyship. She would step out, she would give him something, and he would come to me. It was a 50 cent coin. And he said, here's the paper, here's the coin. And that was a 45- cent tip because the paper was only five cents for me. So I got—here's the capper: you'd think I'd be sensible enough to ask her name. I never asked her name. And I don't know to this day.

RM [00:38:25] And you a reporter.

RS [00:38:26] I know, I know.

RM [00:38:32] And the reason the paper did so well, of course, for first of all, people wanted. But you sold ads.

RS [00:38:37] Oh, yes. Yes. Full of ads.

RM [00:38:39] Yeah. People wanted to advertise in the paper.

RS [00:38:41] They did. Then they were very keen to. Yeah. Yeah.

RM [00:38:46] And of course your labour costs were much lower.

RS [00:38:50] They were zero.

RM [00:38:53] So it was a huge success.

RS [00:38:55] It certainly was. We made a lot of money, which is why they had to, in effect, make the agreement that they did make six months later.

RM [00:39:07] And describe the mood of the people putting the Express out. I mean, you know, a lot of them were younger reporters. And, you know, I mean, it was there must have been a lot of camaraderie and solidarity.

RS [00:39:19] There was.

RM [00:39:20] You know, you're not your usual, boss, you know. And so what was that like?

RS [00:39:26] Well. Actually, the first thing we did was pick three management people. We can call them management people. We did we did use the same terms. They had a managing editor, a city editor and a news editor. So, it was the negotiating committee who picked them, five of us, six of us—and we just said, this person, this person. And they worked out, they were people who were respected by others.

RM [00:40:01] And you still covered the legislature?

RS [00:40:04] Oh, gosh. Yes.

RM [00:40:06] In fact, this was the time of the NDP and the Barrett government. So it was even more exciting.

RS [00:40:11] It certainly was, and it certainly was. Bill—who was the labour minister?

RM [00:40:17] Bill King.

RS [00:40:18] Bill King. Thank you.

RM [00:40:19] I mean, did they bend over backwards to help you out because they're the NDP, and buy more copies than they might have?

RS [00:40:27] I don't know if they did that, but they certainly—well, I'm not going to say.

RM [00:40:32] Oh no, say it.

RS [00:40:33] I don't know about buying a newspaper, but in terms of—the appointment of an industrial inquiry commissioner who had particular powers was very, very useful for us.

RM [00:40:49] You remember who it was? Was it Clive McKee?

RS [00:40:51] Yes. It was.

RM [00:40:52] Yeah. And because an industrial inquiry commissioner has sort of certain powers, because it looked like the strike was never going to end.

RS [00:41:00] I didn't think it was, no. There was no indication. I mean, no reason why it should end either. We were doing fine.

RM [00:41:09] People wanted to keep going forever.

RS [00:41:11] I did.

RM [00:41:12] Yeah. And you didn't have to work a 40-hour week?

RS [00:41:16] No. Mind you I could give up selling the newspaper at the shopping centre.

RM [00:41:23] Were you able to—I mean, you were on the negotiating committee.

RS [00:41:26] I was.

RM [00:41:27] So were you able to report too, or did you just spend your time on the negotiating committee and sell the newspaper?

RS [00:41:34] So the first two months of the strike, I was too busy with organizing things. And in negotiations such as they were, they were just pathetic excuses for meeting where nothing happened. It was obvious to us that the company had no intention of coming to any kind of agreement that would be satisfactory to us.

RM [00:42:04] Who owned the paper, then?

RS [00:42:06] FP Publications of Winnipeg.

RM [00:42:08] Okay. So it's just going nowhere, the negotiations?

RS [00:42:15] No. So that's why I had time. I had time on my hands, so I actually volunteered to sell advertising, which drew a laugh from the people who sell advertising because they probably thought I couldn't sell advertising, probably right too. But they said, you can sell newspapers. That wasn't what I offered to do. Having made an offer to sell, it was do what I had to do. I sold the paper, but I sold—you know, there were other reporters who sell the paper. Ab Kent, another Times reporter, he sold the paper at the other end of the shopping centre.

RM [00:42:54] That reminds me. Where did the advertise—I mean, you know, you had you brought all your—you know, all the union people weren't just reporters there. The advertising office was unionized. And so where did they set up their operation?

RS [00:43:07] Well. When you set people free to do what they can do instead of telling them what to do all the time, it's amazing what people can do and will do. We had a reporter at the Colonist. His name was Bruce Lowther. And he realized—I mean, we should have realized—he realized that what we needed was a proper office. None of this borrowing the Teamsters Union office.

RM [00:43:37] Oh, yeah. Yeah.

RS [00:43:38] And so he happened to know the person who—either a person who worked in the credit union directly across the street from the newspaper, from Victoria Press, and he went there and then said, do you have any space? And they did. They had two rooms— big rooms. So he fixed it up for us. We didn't know this at all. And then he came to us and said, I've done it.

RM [00:44:14] Telephones, the whole thing.

RS [00:44:16] Oh, yeah. Yeah. So we had our advertising department and our circulation department were in one room and the newsroom was in the other office.

RM [00:44:29] Tremendous camaraderie though, eh?

RS [00:44:30] Oh, yeah.

RM [00:44:32] Beers after work and all this sort of stuff.

RS [00:44:37] There wasn't a lot of drinking going on.

RM [00:44:38] What?

RS [00:44:39] No. no, no.

RM [00:44:41] They were smoking dope. [laughter]

RS [00:44:43] I don't know about that. Not me.

RM [00:44:47] I just want to point out here that this is a very unusual—I mean, it has happened with newspaper strikes in other places, but, I mean, for a union on strike to then produce on their own the product that they produce on their regular jobs.

RS [00:45:04] Yes.

RM [00:45:04] When the IWA goes on strike, they don't suddenly start logging and selling the logs.

RS [00:45:09] No.

RM [00:45:09] So this is a very unusual thing.

RS [00:45:12] It is, but it's happened. It has happened in a lot of newspaper strikes because it's something we can do, and it's something that people want.

RM [00:45:24] And it's the craft unions too, who are—.

RS [00:45:27] Absolutely, we're all in it together.

RM [00:45:30] And they—and again, do you know how much money it did make?

RS [00:45:36] No I specifically I don't. I don't know whether that's because I perhaps wanted to be ignorant.

RM [00:45:44] Yeah.

RS [00:45:44] Yeah. But I don't actually know. I know we made plenty. Yeah. I mean, I was making, as I said, 75 to 80 per cent of my normal net take home pay.

RM [00:45:57] I mean, which is amazing.

RS [00:45:59] The clerical people, for example, were making 90 per cent. They weren't allowed to make more than 90 per cent. The union had a rule, you can't make more than 90 per cent of your net pay.

RM [00:46:11] Yeah. All right. So how long were you on strike?

RS [00:46:14] Six months.

RM [00:46:15] Six months. That's a quite a long time.

RS [00:46:18] It was.

RM [00:46:18] But, you know, of course, it was leavened by the newspaper. And so how did it finally resolve itself?

RS [00:46:25] With a satisfactory agreement.

RM [00:46:27] Well, Clive McKee got involved, and—

RS [00:46:29] Yes, he did.

RM [00:46:30] And the company wanted to settle.

RS [00:46:32] They had to go. They had to.

RM [00:46:34] Why do you say that?

RS [00:46:36] I think the company would have simply gone out of business in Victoria. And we would have taken the business over.

RM [00:46:44] Wow.

RS [00:46:45] Because we had the ability and they didn't.

RM [00:46:50] Was there any talk of making the Victoria Express permanent?

RS [00:46:54] Yes.

RM [00:46:55] And?

RS [00:46:56] Well, that was just talk.

RM [00:47:00] You didn't think that was a good idea?

RS [00:47:03] I did, but some didn't.

RM [00:47:08] Well, that would have been history.

RS [00:47:09] It would have been.

RM [00:47:10] So what was it like when you finally had to—well, people were happy with the agreement?

RS [00:47:15] Yes, they were.

RM [00:47:16] And so they voted for it.

RS [00:47:18] They did.

RM [00:47:18] What was it like going back to work after six months?

RS [00:47:23] Interesting. Everybody was told, and I did my fair share of telling people, don't gloat. Because the managers, you know, some of the managers are pretty nice people. And some of the managers are different. We didn't want anybody to be gloating that we had won because we had won.

RM [00:47:48] Yeah.

RS [00:47:48] And everybody knew we won. But when you have won, you don't need to say you've won.

RM [00:47:54] Yeah.

RS [00:47:54] So spent a lot of time—

RM [00:48:00] What was it like putting out the last edition of The Express?

RS [00:48:06] My memory is a bit hazy. I think by that time, perhaps drink had appeared.

RM [00:48:11] Yes. Okay. Was it kind of bittersweet, though, in some ways?

RS [00:48:17] It was especially so with that picture that you—

RM [00:48:20] Talk about the picture and then we'll show it. We'll get Roger to show the newspaper. Talk about that picture.

RS [00:48:21] Okay. There was a tourist train in suburban Victoria in View Royal. It ran for four or six miles or something. And we knew the owner of it. And we said, we want to get this picture of all of us on the train. When he saw all of us climbing onto his train, he had a fit. Because, that is not everybody, by the way. But that's probably a third to a half of the people who were involved that we could round up quickly.

RM [00:48:58] It's a wonderful picture, isn't it?

RS [00:49:00] Yeah. Let's all go out there and we'll wave goodbye. And there's the Express sign on the tender.

RM [00:49:08] Here, hold it up. [Rogers holds the paper up for the camera.] Isn't that a great picture?

NF [00:49:14] It's great. I'll get a nice snap of it.

RS [00:49:17] And The Express, here's the sign and I'm in here somewhere.

RM [00:49:22] Yeah. And, you know, it's a much thicker newspaper than we get today.

RS [00:49:28] How many pages is it? I didn't look.

RM [00:49:30] Well, this is it. Look at all these ads. My God, 20 page. You know. Look, classified ads.

RS [00:49:40] Now remember them?

RM [00:49:43] And did you get wire service or did you just steal?

RS [00:49:46] Well, sort of borrowed.

RM [00:49:50] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, that is great. Was that the last strike at Victoria Press?

RS [00:49:56] It wasn't. I should say it was a strike and a lockout because it was both. The pressmen went on strike. The other four groups, including the Guild, were—we called it a lockout. It was, to be technical about it, it was a cessation of publication, quote unquote, occasioned by the pressmen's strike.

RM [00:50:22] What year was that?

RS [00:50:24] This is '73–'74. So when I loosely called it a strike, actually it was a strike-lockout.

RM [00:50:32] Strike-lockout. That's just a good precis of it.

RS [00:50:35] There was another strike in 2002. This was after I'd—two years after I'd retired. And that lasted nine weeks. That was a more conventional strike. And there was no strike newspaper. I don't know why they didn't.

RM [00:50:56] Yeah, it was harder then maybe.

RS [00:50:57] Maybe harder.

RM [00:51:00] Yeah. Different times. The Pacific Press, the next, you know, after their very successful Express in '78–'79. They went out in '84 and they said no Express.

RS [00:51:13] Correct. And before the '78–'79 one, there was another one in '70.

RM [00:51:20] '70, I think. That was the first one.

RS [00:51:23] It was. Yeah. You did it twice in the 1970s. We did it once in the 1970s.

RM [00:51:28] And I mean, again, it showed you The Newspaper Guild was a strong union.

RS [00:51:35] It was. And so were the other unions too.

RM [00:51:38] The craft unions, always.

RS [00:51:39] Always. Yeah. But, technological change wrecked them.

RM [00:51:46] And you got involved with the international of The Newspaper Guild?

RS [00:51:49] Oh, yeah. This was going on same time. It was the year of the start of the—well, it was 1973. From 1973 to 1985, I was the Western Canada vice president of The Newspaper Guild. So that was another—

RM [00:52:08] Did that take you away from your job?

RS [00:52:11] For 3 or 4 weeks a year? It did. Yeah, I had a leave of absence.

RM [00:52:17] What were your responsibilities?

RS [00:52:22] Union-wise?

RM [00:52:23] Yeah.

RS [00:52:23] Oh. Well, I was one of 16 people on the international executive board, and it's our job to be management of the union. These words can be chucked around so easily, you know.

RM [00:52:36] What was it like. That experience?

RS [00:52:38] Oh, interesting. Especially when the employees threatened to go on strike.

RM [00:52:44] Anyway. Well, I mean, The Newspaper Guild was a big union in those days.

RS [00:52:50] It was—we had about 33,000 members in both countries.

RM [00:52:55] Yeah. Was that a problem with the American leadership of the Guild?

RS [00:53:00] Well, we had—there were certain differences. I mean, the first thing I did when I was elected was—I said, we've got to change the name of this union.

RM [00:53:07] Because it was the American—

RS [00:53:09] It was The American Newspaper Guild. I said, no, no, no. So I sponsored several resolutions, one of which eventually passed, and it became then The Newspaper Guild with a blank for America. So we got rid of the word American, and that was important. It didn't do anything.

RM [00:53:30] But it was good. It's a good change.

RS [00:53:34] Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I thought so.

RM [00:53:36] Were you a militant?

RS [00:53:38] People said so. I've been called—I remember one guy called me a communist. Which I took as rather a compliment.

RM [00:53:51] Where did this come from, Roger? You know, thrusting yourself forward in such a way, you know, to represent working people?

RS [00:53:59] I knew you'd ask that question.

RM [00:54:01] Well. Was there an answer?

RS [00:54:02] Yes, there is an answer. I went to boarding school at age 11, and this was the first of two boarding schools. And this boarding school was awful. Primarily, the food was awful. It often is in institutions. And so I thought in my naivete that we could improve the situation if we could persuade all our parents to take us out of school, and then they wouldn't have us there. Well, it didn't work, except with my own parents who took me out of school and put me in another boarding school, which was much nicer and had decent food. So I won, but—

RM [00:54:54] Others did not.

RS [00:54:54] Others didn't. And that's where the idea of acting collectively first occurred to me. And then working for Canadian Press when it was nonunion, there was no way that I could resolve particular issues that applied to me because I was just one person. So basically, fooey balloey.

RM [00:55:20] And then you retired.

RS [00:55:22] Oh, not till 2000.

RM [00:55:25] Well, okay. Well, do you want to talk about anything—did anything happened before 2000 that you would like to talk about? You're a good court reporter, I think. Didn't you become a court reporter?

RS [00:55:35] I was court reporter for 15 or 16 years.

RM [00:55:38] Yeah. Well?

RS [00:55:42] That was covering murder and what not. The only thing that strikes me—

HA [00:55:51] You're the most emancipated man I know. Speak about it.

RM [00:55:57] There you go. You got an order.

RS [00:56:01] Well.

HA [00:56:02] Why?

RS [00:56:08] I—it goes back to a case involving Barbara—who is—who is Barbara? I'm trying to think of her surname.

RM [00:56:25] Who was she?

RS [00:56:26] She worked for the Province.

RM [00:56:28] Oh, Barbara McClintock.

RS [00:56:29] McClintock.

RM [00:56:30] Tick tock, tick tock.

RS [00:56:31] Tick tock.

RM [00:56:33] The first tick tock [TikTok].

RS [00:56:36] She was perhaps the first grievance that I had. This is 1968, 1969. And we were talking one time, and she mentioned something about salary. And I said, well, you're covering the legislature now. And she'd had only one or two years experience.

RM [00:57:03] Yeah.

RS [00:57:03] But she was good.

RM [00:57:05] She's great.

RS [00:57:06] And she was promoted. So our contract had an interesting clause in it. It said that everybody who covers the legislature get senior pay, period no matter how many years' experience you've got. But she wasn't getting it. And I knew it because she told me. So I went to the manager and said, we've got a problem. I said, we got a problem, you've got a problem. And he—his attitude was, she should be grateful for the opportunity he'd given her. God. And I said, no, no, no, no, you have got to pay her senior pay now. And what's more, you've got to pay it back from when she started.

RM [00:57:53] Retroactive.

RS [00:57:55] That's all there is. And he did. We didn't go to arbitration, but that was the first of three or four cases, exactly the same. They call them misclassifications. That's a nice word. Screwing women out of what they should be paid is what it really was, and I handled all three or four of them and then it stopped.

RM [00:58:30] They finally got the message.

RS [00:58:31] Yeah. Power.

RM [00:58:33] You know, I should have asked you about grievances that you remember. Because this is always one of the things about unions. People just think about—they're on strike or whatever. But, grievances, you know, you have rights as an employee.

RS [00:58:47] Absolutely. And certainly Barbara McClintock would tell this story that I've just told you, summarized to you, for the rest of her life.

RM [00:58:56] Well, everybody loved Barbara McClintock.

RS [00:58:59] She always mentioned it. She was very pro-union because of that.

RM [00:59:03] Yes. Any other grievances you remember?

RS [00:59:09] Golly, those are the ones that I really remember.

RM [00:59:11] Well, that's a memorable one.

RS [00:59:15] Oh. Negotiating birthdays. That was a laugh. People would say, you get your birthdays off? I said, well why not.

RM [00:59:25] That's right.

RS [00:59:27] We negotiated that back in '74.

RM [00:59:30] Yeah. I remember getting my birthdays off. Often you'd work it and put in for double pay.

RS [00:59:36] That's right. Or you could use it as a lieu day.

RM [00:59:39] Or lose it—

RS [00:59:40] Or transfer it to someone—

RM [00:59:40] —oh, no. In fact, I probably did that more than anything.

RS [00:59:42] Yeah. Me too.

RM [00:59:44] All right. Okay. Anything else about your career? Because I want to go into your—your labour heritage stuff too.

RS [00:59:55] Golly.

RM [00:59:55] Because after you retired, you developed this interest in labour heritage and telling workers' stories.

RS [01:00:02] Yeah. And also getting involved in community associations and dealing with fighting city hall. Yeah. So it was very similar.

RM [01:00:13] Well, yeah. Fighting against the oppressor.

RS [01:00:16] If you want to look at it that way.

RM [01:00:18] But you took a particular love for Cumberland.

RS [01:00:22] I'd always—yeah. I don't know why. Anyway Helen and I—she was new to British Columbia—that's a whole other story. I won't go into that. Anyway, I said let's go on this—we'll go on this little tour of Cumberland. So we tour Dunsmuir Avenue and the residential streets nearby. It's like walking back into the previous century. And, as we were driving away, I said, there's a cemetery here I'd like to take you to. This is what you do to your girlfriend, right? Take her to the cemetery. And I said, there's a particular headstone here. It's very unusual. And it's for Ginger Goodwin. And so we went there and I summarized the story of Ginger Goodwin to Helen. And she said, that would be an interesting book, she said. A brilliant idea. And I said, yes, of course. I agreed as one does. And, I thought it might take two years to write. Twenty.

RM [01:01:36] Wow.

RS [01:01:37] That includes three years where I just got fed up with the whole thing.

RM [01:01:40] What was the problem? Lack of—

RS [01:01:44] Lack of information. The first thing—one of the earliest things I discovered was, unlike middle class people, working class people don't keep diaries, don't record things in writing, and there's nothing there or next to nothing there. If you're writing about a middle class person and, oh, you'll find letters or whatever, so you've got material to work from. So it's very hard to get information. That was the difficulty.

RM [01:02:19] What lengths did you go to get information?

RS [01:02:22] Well. I thought he's got a common name, Goodwin. I know where he was born. You figure these things out pretty quickly. I'll write a letter to every person named Goodwin in this area. That turned out to be about 50 or so letters. In those days, you did write letters. Yes. It wasn't like today. So I wrote letters. And I said, I'm writing this book about this guy and gave a brief summary about it. And I said, if you're related to him or know anything about him, please write to me. And this woman named Doris Goodwin did. And what a treasure she turned out to be.

RM [01:03:16] Wow.

RS [01:03:17] And she had some information. And what she didn't know she was going to go and get. And she and her daughter went off on the bus, because they don't own car. And they went on a bus all over South Yorkshire into museums and visiting people, newspapers digging stuff up for us, which—I mean, we made some visits there. But having somebody—she was our boots on the ground. Lovely woman, Doris Goodwin. And much of what we knew about Goodwin, Ginger Goodwin, we know courtesy of her, from his birth to age 19 when he came to Canada, and of course he was 31 when he was killed.

RM [01:04:10] So what sparked your interest in Ginger Goodwin? Was it the gravestone or the fact that—

RS [01:04:18] The gravestone has always interested me. I was always interested in history. So there's the history, there was the gravestone. Then Helen said this would make an interesting book. So of course—

RM [01:04:34] But you kept at it.

RS [01:04:36] Oh, yeah. Well, I gave up this year. I gave up at one point, I got fed up. You can develop a sort of a love-hate relationship. Oh, to heck with it. And for three years, I didn't touch it. And then, a professor at SFU, Mark Leier—

RM [01:05:01] Yeah, I know Mark.

RS [01:05:03] Okay. He really encouraged me to press on with it. And others did too, but mostly it was him. [Coughs] Excuse me.

RM [01:05:16] Well, I mean, there had been a book written about Ginger Goodwin.

RS [01:05:20] Oh, there had been several. Oh, yeah.

RM [01:05:22] And you didn't feel they were adequate or you just wanted to—

RS [01:05:25] No. No. Well, they were—they weren't what I wanted to do.

RM [01:05:31] Right.

RS [01:05:32] That's the best way of putting it.

RM [01:05:34] Because you took it—you're a reporter too.

RS [01:05:36] True.

RM [01:05:37] You know, you're skeptical of —

RS [01:05:41] Well, I wanted—I had to go back to original sources.

RM [01:05:43] Right.

RS [01:05:43] Because there was too much second-hand stuff. And a lot of it was untrue, or sort of untrue. And I had to do the best I could do to get back to, to get to the original. That was difficult. That took time.

RM [01:06:03] Is there anything in particular of the legend of Ginger Goodwin that has been passed down that isn't true that you can think of?

RS [01:06:13] Well, the casual reference to, he was murdered.

RM [01:06:18] You don't think he was murdered?

RS [01:06:19] Well. I don't think a lot of people know what the word murder actually means. Murdered doesn't certainly mean killed. Obviously, killing is an essential ingredient, if you like, of murder.

RM [01:06:32] Because he was killed.

RS [01:06:33] He definitely was killed. But was it murder? Was it manslaughter? Was it accident? Was it self-defence? Now it's starting to get—because I covered courts so much in—I covered, I once figured out I probably covered 50 or 55 murder cases. You sort of develop a sense of, well, it may not be quite what it appears to be. Anyway, I explore it in the book.

RM [01:07:03] Can you summarize it?

RS [01:07:04] Yes, I can, but no, I'm not. It would give the story away.

RM [01:07:09] Well, not everyone's going to read your book.

RS [01:07:13] I've hopes they will.

RM [01:07:15] Are you proud of your book?

RS [01:07:16] Absolutely.

RS [01:07:19] Well, I know that at one time, it may be still, it was part of the required reading for a labour course at SFU. And that pleases me immensely.

RM [01:07:32] Right.

RS [01:07:34] Especially since I never went to the university.

RM [01:07:37] Yeah, I was going to ask you, you were 16, you were out in the workforce?

RS [01:07:41] Yeah, that was quite common then.

RM [01:07:43] Yeah, yeah.

RS [01:07:44] I'd say about three quarters of the kids I knew left school at 15, 16. Very few went on to university.

RM [01:07:53] Right.

RS [01:07:54] I mean, now it's different.

RM [01:07:56] And you also developed an interest in Joe Naylor. You wrote a really terrific piece for the Victoria Colonist, I think, on Joe Naylor.

RS [01:08:06] For the Times Colonist, the papers were merged by that time. I always thought Naylor got a bit shortchanged. He sort of lived in the shadow of Ginger Goodwin. In some ways, he contributed much more to labour and over a longer period. He didn't pay for it with his life.

RM [01:08:27] Yeah. He had the virtue of living longer.

RS [01:08:30] Yes. He did. So I always thought he got a bit shortchanged by living in the shadow in effect of Ginger Goodwin. And I thought he deserved more. And I wanted to give him more in that full page article I wrote.

RM [01:08:49] Why do you think we need to know about these people and to know about labour heritage?

RS [01:08:55] I think we need to know our past. If we want to know where we're going in this world, we might start off by learning where we've been.

RM [01:09:03] But also, if I could put words in your mouth—I mean, to me, one of the reasons I like labour history is because it reminds us of the sacrifices that those who went before us made to enjoy the benefits we have today.

RS [01:09:19] That's true. These things didn't just arrive, chung, like that. They were fought for. To get back to this word I love: power. At certain points people had power or thought they had power. Sometimes they didn't have power and they lost.

RM [01:09:37] Well, they've lost just about every strike until they finally got legal bargaining rights.

RS [01:09:42] They lost a lot. They lost a lot.

RM [01:09:43] Yeah, especially in Cumberland and the coal mining communities.

RS [01:09:47] Yeah, the big strike in 1912, 1914. That was a bad loss.

RM [01:09:56] So I want to thank you, Roger, for your help to me in writing some of the things I've written because, as you know, I send you a lot of emails asking questions. As a journalist, I want to make sure it's right too.

RS [01:10:09] Good.

RM [01:10:11] You know, I mean, I would regard Ginger Goodwin as a martyr, but I—

RS [01:10:14] I do too.

RM [01:10:15] But we'll never know exactly what happened. No, no, but there's no doubt he was killed because of who he was.

RS [01:10:23] Yes.

RM [01:10:23] However it happened.

RS [01:10:25] Yes.

RM [01:10:27] All right. Anything else? Oh, I know what I need to—a depressing question. You know, we were both labour reporters and reporters and involved in things when newspapers were so powerful and so popular, and everyone read the newspaper. And, you know, the Times and the Colonist and the Pacific Press, the Sun and the Province, big buildings. Look at all those employees on that on that train, you know, and you look at it today. I mean, it's pretty tough, eh.

RS [01:11:03] Sad.

RM [01:11:03] Yeah. What do you think people have lost with the demise of newspapers?

RS [01:11:08] Information.

RM [01:11:12] That's it. That's it. And they don't realize it.

RS [01:11:16] And what they think they've got as information is just not. So it's, it's all very sad.

RM [01:11:27] It is. And we were lucky.

RS [01:11:29] Very.

RM [01:11:30] To be part of it when it was terrific.

RS [01:11:33] Who would have thought they really were the good old days.

RM [01:11:38] You took the words right out of my mouth, 'cause my line is: little did we know as we whined and complained, we were living through a golden age of journalism.

RS [01:11:47] That's true.

RM [01:11:49] Well, this is great, Roger. Anything else you'd like to touch on? Sorry. What were you going to say?

RS [01:11:53] There probably are, but I'll probably just talk forever.

RM [01:11:56] Oh, this was great. I loved hearing about the Express.

RS [01:12:00] Yeah. Yeah. There's so many memories of the Express coming together and the solidarity of people in—and I used to say to people, you know, because people did get worried and I'd say, There's nothing to worry about. We're going to win as long as we stay together. If we don't stay together, that's the only way they— the other side can win. And we stayed together.

RM [01:12:31] And you won.

RS [01:12:32] And we won. And everybody else can do the same—

RS [01:12:37] Good way to end.