

Darrell Walker of Lodge 191, 70 Years of Membership.



Darrell Walker receives his 70-year pin from Business Manager of Lodge 191 Robert Taylor. Written by Richard MacIntosh.

Brother Darrell Walker of Lodge 191 recently celebrated a significant anniversary with the union: 70 years of membership!

Brother Walker started in the trade just after serving in the second world war. His first job as a Boilermaker was cleaning scotch marine boilers at Victoria Machine Depot (VMD) in 1946. A Canadian Pacific Rail (CPR) cargo ship was used as a crew ship for the British Royal Navy during the war and was being converted back to its original use. "I was told if I did a good job they will find me more work."

After proving his worth, he was appointed as a Boilermaker fitter helper where he learned the skills of a burner. After successfully

completing a welding program, he went to work at the Federal Government Dockyard in Esquimalt as a welder in the sheet metal department under the Boilermakers. "The Boilermakers do all the welding at the dockyard." Later he went to work for Yarrows shipyard working on the boiler gang, where he learned to weld. "6011 was king in the yards at that time."

Darrell told us "The shipyards are a feast or famine industry". He was able to find work in construction between jobs with Lodge 359 at Crofton and Port Alberni pulp mills on Vancouver Island. After Local Lodge 191 was reinstated back into the IBB in 1951, Darrell was offered more work in construction with local 359. During that time, the federal dockyard had an opportunity for employment. This would mean Darrell would have an opportunity to be working at home instead of travel carding. Darrell took the position, and he spent the remainder of his working career at the federal dockyard until his retirement.

Before 1951 the shipyard was represented by other organizations. A labour dispute put everyone on the picket line. The dispute did not go well. Members were approached by the IBB and Jim Downie IBB District Rep. from Vancouver attended a meeting as requested by many of the Boilermakers "He told them they would get strike pay if they were members of the IBB – that did it - everyone voted to join the IBB – when we rejoin the IBB, we asked Downie where was our strike pay – he told, 'I said if you were part of the IBB at the time you voted to go on strike you would have gotten the strike pay.' The strike ended very soon after the vote to join the IBB when an agreement was reached." Eventually, the shipyard workers did receive some strike benefit pay.

James McConach was elected the first Business Manager of the reinstated lodge November 18, 1951, serving in that position till 1966 when he was replaced by Neil Hindle.

Serving as a steward, Darrell tells us how he led a walk out over safety practices once. “The painters were using a paint that had arsenic and the painters could not tell how much arsenic was in the paint they were spraying. I met with a doctor along with another steward to talk about it, and he offered us cigarettes – we were both non smokers, so we turned him down – he went on about how cigarettes were more harmful than the paint. The owners of the yard threaten to sue me and others, they never did, at the end we improve communications regarding safety.”

Brother Walker offered his advice to new Boilermakers coming into the trade, union & industry “Think of the future, most of trade unionists don’t think about the future, but when your career ends it’s important to have a future. It costs money to take care of your self when you retire. Good wages are important, but the pension and benefits are important also.”

Brother Walker served Local 191 as a Shop Steward, Vice President and President on our Local 191 Executive Board. Darrell Walker retired January 1st, 1994.

Local Lodge 191 thanks Brother Walker for his long service and contribution to our Local.

Happy 97th Birthday to Darrell Walker, June 11th 2022!