

Museum of History and Industry
Historical Society of Seattle and King County

Transcript

Wilfred Miller, Nels Nelson, Roy St. Clair - taped interview,
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Tape 1, Side A

This is an interview with Mr. Wilfred Miller, Mr. Nels Nelson, and Mr. Roy St. Clair, on the 17th of January, 1985. The interviewer is Lorraine McConaghy for the Museum of History and Industry.

Q. How did you come to work at the shipyard, Mr. Miller?
And what did you do there, and when did you come?

Mr. Miller Well, I was station manager for the Union Oil company service station in Kirkland. For years, I took care of all the supervisors' cars at Lake Washington Shipyard - Eric Rich, Heine Knust, Morgan, Van Dyke, and the rest of them.

They (Union Oil) were kind of kicking me around - they shifted me to Seattle, and then back out to Kirkland. Eric Rich said, "Hey, you don't want to put up with that any longer. Come down to work at the yard."

I thought about it, and said, "Okay."

He said, "I'll take care of everything." He even got my union card, and everything else - I didn't even have to do that!

So I went to work at the yard.

Q. When was that?

Mr. Miller 1940.

For a couple of weeks, I was on that doggone old metal punch, punching holes in plates, and I thought, "Boy, I should have stayed where I was."

Then he came around after a couple of weeks, and said, "You're going up in the pattern loft."

I said, "Okay," and that was a real education. That was quite an education. I spent over a year up there in that mold loft, that pattern loft.

Q. At that time, was that the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey boat? The PATHFINDER?

Mr. Miller Well, I didn't work on the PATHFINDER. This was all Navy seaplane tenders.

Mr. St. Clair AVP's.

Q. Were the net tenders still there?

Mr. Nelson No, the seaplane tenders refueled seaplanes.

Q. No, I meant the early contract for anti-submarine net tenders. That was only six ships, and I can't find anyone who

ever worked on those.¹

Mr. Miller Not at Lake Washington - I never heard of it.

Q. They were called the BOXWOOD, the ASH, the ALOE...?

Mr. Nelson Might have been before the PATHFINDER. It was a shipyard when they built the PATHFINDER.

Mr. Miller Yes, but it wasn't a very large one.

Mr. St. Clair They redid the KALAKALA, too, the ferry.

Mr. Nelson Yes, I guess they did.

Mr. Miller Yes, that was prior to the PATHFINDER.²
The PATHFINDER was on the ways [when I came to Lake Washington], and that was the last ship they built for the Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Q. How did you come, Mr. Nelson? When did you come?

Mr. Nelson Well, out of high school, in them days, the only place you used to go was in the woods. So I was a logger for quite a long time. My sisters told me to get the heck out of the woods!

They had a welding school down on Fifth Avenue, and they taught me. I went down there. Actually the only job I could find in Seattle was work on the railroad, on the section gang. I drove a truck for them, and when there wasn't any truck driving to do, you worked in the section gang. At that time, I could swing an eight pound spike maul for eight solid hours and close up a tavern that night!

So I was going to welding school at night, but welding wasn't coming in too good. I think that was around the first of 1939. I didn't get a job until 1940, and then in April of 1941, I got a job at Lake Washington, going through the union. That's how I started at Lake Washington, and as close as I can tell, it was April of '41.

At that time the PATHFINDER was on the ways, but it was pretty well completed.

I started out on the slab, where they were starting to put together the AVP's.

Q. Mr. St. Clair, how did you come to work at Lake Washington?

Mr. St. Clair Well, I tried to get on at the shipyards, and I went down to Seattle-Tacoma and took a burner's test, but I didn't know anything about it, so I didn't get on there. Then a friend of mine said, "Go down to the union hall. They're going to send a bunch of men someplace."

So I went down to the union hall and they send me to Lake Washington Shipyard. And that was Friday the 13th, 1942!

They put me on as a shipfitter helper. Rich was the man that I seen to go on swing shift.

Mr. Miller He was the supervisor.

Mr. St. Clair I was there three days, and then spent the rest of the time on swing shift - three and a half years. I got laid off the week after V-J day, 1945.

Q. So you were there until the end.

Mr. St. Clair I went to welder's school after I'd been a shipfitter helper about three months. I chose to go to welding school. So I was a welder's helper for about two months.

Q. You two guys who were there earlier, Mr. Nelson and Mr. Miller, what changes did you see as the shipyard got bigger? Did it get big fast?

Mr. Miller Well, once we started laying keels. We had three ways, and once they started laying the keels and getting the steel out, then they started increasing employment. How high they got there, I don't know. For a while, we only had a day shift. Then they had a swing shift. Then later, they had three shifts. So, at one time, at the peak, there was quite a few thousand men working there.

Mr. St. Clair I heard that there was 13000. There were three shifts in '42 and '43. Then the graveyard shift was deleted, and there was just the two shifts. Of course, the day shift had five times more than we did on swing shift, at least. The swing shift kind of went downhill, too, during the body of the war.

Mr. Nelson I'd say, basically, day shift is the shift they counted on anyway. Swing shift just kind of fit in. But, even in later years, I'd say swing shift was the one that picked up the slack. The confusion was over. You had a job to do, and you just went ahead and did it. They could out-produce day shift. Basically, the confusion was gone. "You do this." It was on that order.

Mr. St. Clair After they built the first ship, it went pretty fast after that. The first ship, they didn't know what they were doing too much on. On the second ship, they seemed to get on like clockwork. And through the rest of them - through 24 of them.³

Mr. Miller You've got to realize that there were not too many people who really knew anything about building ships. Practically everybody that was out there had to be trained.

 I had 55 men on my crew, and we did not train them all as boilermakers. We made specialists out of them. Maybe a shipfitter and a helper would put in bulkheads, and another one would do another job. And that's what they'd do from one ship to another.

Q. Mass production.

Mr. Miller Right. So if you tried to put them on

anything else, they didn't know a thing about it. You just had to leave them on that one job, more or less. And that's the way it was with a lot of your welders and burners.

Mr. Nelson Yes, that's true. They more or less specialized. But welding was a little bit different - they had guys that cut nothing but holes in bulkheads with a bulkhead cutter. But, heavens, they'd go from one ship to the next. They knew their job right through the ways. But others would specialize in something else.

Q. Sometimes people have said that there were productivity problems in the first months of 4- - well, in any year you'd care to name, people were talking about productivity problems! Were there any bottlenecks at Lake Washington Shipyard? Places where things got very slow? It has sometimes seemed to me that there was a very long gap between launching and commissioning.

Mr. St. Clair Well, outfitting was a big job.

Q. What did outfitting involve?

Mr. Miller Well, once they launched the ship off the ways, that was just the hull, just completed. Then they launched it and took it out to the outfitting dock, and then everything else was put in - all the electrical wiring, bunks, everything. Everything was completed there. They made a complete ship at the outfitting dock.

Mr. Nelson It had to float when they launched it, and that was all!

Mr. St. Clair I understand according to the contract, when they launched the boat, they got so much money.

Mr. Nelson When they laid the keel, they got so much; when they launched it, they got so much - a percentage of the cost of it. When it was accepted, they got the rest of it.

Mr. Miller It was all on 10 %.

Q. Cost plus ten percent.

Mr. Miller So the yard didn't care how many men they hired.

Mr. Nelson I agree with you on that. (chuckling)

Mr. Miller It just cost more, so they got the 10 % over and above that. So they made good money on it - the more they hired, the more money the yard got! (chuckling)

Q. Were there a lot of people who had nothing to do?

Mr. Nelson No, not really. There was usually something for them to do. It probably could have been far more productive. But if you had that kind of a workforce, you had

to go along with it. In other words, if you had really good boilermakers and really good welders, they could have gone through that far faster, but that field didn't exist. They had to more or less train them as they went along. They did the best they could.

Actually there was only one thing that really bothered me. I think the company did a fairly good job overall, but one thing did bug the heck out of me.

You remember that depth finder they had right up in the bow of them AVP's? It went right down in, into there (gesturing to describe a large object mounted in a tight and awkward spot). It was the worst thing to put in there was!

Mr. Miller I had men put that in! (chuckling)

Mr. Nelson They put them in and then they rectified it in the blueprints. A rectification. But they put that thing in and you had to weld it in, it was inspected, and you knew all the time you were working on it - and it was one heck of a thing to work on! - you knew it was going to be burned out, and a revision put in. Now that's the only thing I can really put my finger on to blame Lake Washington Shipyard for. Now that's using somebody. If it had been out in the open - something decent to work on, it wouldn't have bothered you so bad. But you were standing on your head, working in places like this, with big welds coming up under a flange, about this big around - you didn't have over six inches around that darn thing! It had to be perfect, and then they'd burn it out and put in the other one!

But that's the only thing I'd blame Lake Washington Shipyard for using the government, or whatever it was.

Mr. Miller It really wasn't their fault.

Q. Would that be Navy change orders?

Mr. Miller Well, the architect that drew up the plans on that. What was that outfit? Heck, I had a caseful of blueprints from them... A big outfit, and they're still in business...

Q. Yes, they are... I know who they are...

Mr. Miller I think they drew up most of the -

Q. Nickum! Nickum and Spaulding.

Mr. Miller Yes, right. They made most of the blueprints, and they made a lot of mistakes.

Q. Well, was it them or the Navy? I mean, weren't you basically building to Navy specifications? Didn't they have inspectors looking at your work?

Mr. Miller Oh, yes.

Mr. St. Clair They didn't have enough Navy inspectors.

Mr. Nelson That really was a revision. I think the first one was acceptable, and then they revised it and put in a new or better one. But why did they put the first one in originally if they had an original? Sure, I guess it worked good on paper, but they shouldn't have put that first one in to start with. They should have put the revision in. That's my complaint.

Mr. Miller Well, this was all kind of a hit and miss proposition. They didn't have enough experience to go ahead and do this in the first place, so a lot of it was from trial and error. They'd build it, and sometimes they'd have to tear it out and revise it cause it didn't work out the first time they made it, or how it was. Then they had to revise it and do it better. But there was a lot of that went on, and it goes back to the fact that we didn't have enough experienced men when we started building ships - they had to train them all. They had to do the same thing with inspectors, with architects, and everybody else.

Q. (to Mr. St. Clair) When you said there weren't enough Navy inspectors, what were you thinking of?

Mr. St. Clair Well, I never did see a Navy inspector all the time I was there! (laughing)

Mr. Nelson Well, they were there.

Mr. St. Clair I don't know where they were - probably goofing off! (laughing)

Mr. Nelson They probably were as inexperienced as everybody else was.

Mr. Miller Well, they were. And it was up to the leadmen, the foremen, and the supervisors of each department to really check on this stuff to see it was done properly.

Mr. Nelson You say you never saw a Navy inspector. I think I saw four or five of them one time, and I got an instructor's job out of it!

Anyway, the gun turrets came out with 1/8" mild steel in them. Well, 1/8" mild steel is no protection from shrapnel or anything else. You could knock a hole in it with a hammer! And I guess the Navy wouldn't accept it. Apparently, it was Navy inspectors then, but they came through supervision - probably through Lofting - they had put 1/4" STS steel around all the vulnerable spots on the gun turrets.

Mr. Miller Then they took it out.
These round turrets for the 50 calibres...

Mr. Nelson I know what you're talking about - you're talking about the gun tubs. I'm talking about the gun turrets the enclosed the cannons themselves.

Mr. Miller Oh, the one on the bow, and the one on the stern?

Mr. Nelson Well, they surrounded the working mechanism of the guns - the 5" guns. That's what they put the STS steel around. But to weld that STS mild steel, we were using a stainless [rod] and stainless is a kind of a rough rod to run. The thing is, you get so much slag out of it - slag is just a black carbon that comes from the rod - it'll run like crazy, and you can't tell what's underneath it just to look at it.

Paul Morgan was out there with these Navy inspectors - they weren't in Navy clothes, I assume they were Navy inspectors because they were the ones that had to pass it. He just told me to weld for a ways, and I picked out a good spot - just a slight vertical. I ran about three feet, and I did come up with a perfect weld. It looked like hell. And he (Morgan) took my slag hammer and knocked all the slag off, and exonerated it to these guys, and they bought it and accepted it, and I got an instructor's job out of it!

Q. Where did you teach? On the spot?

Mr. Nelson Well, you just taught the welders themselves, just helped them. If somebody was having trouble, you tried to show them what was wrong and correct whatever they were doing wrong. So I had it for a year and a half.

Q. Part of the cost-plus contracts that people talk about is not just that there were a lot of men in the yard - maybe more than needed to be there, but that production was wasteful. Did you ever see any signs of materials being wasted?

all three No, not really.

Mr. Miller No, I never saw much of that, unless somebody goofed or something.

Mr. St. Clair I never saw any real waste of any materials.

Mr. Miller If we put in a bulkhead, those were all laid out first and then put in the ship by a big crane. Ordinarily, a lot of the time, they didn't fit properly. Usually, it would be the way the hull was warped. So then the shipfitter would have to scribe it out and have a burner cut it out. Sometimes, when they cut it out, it wouldn't fit, and they'd have a gap in there of an inch, or maybe a half an inch. So you couldn't weld that big a gap, so you put in a piece of steel, and welded it in there - what they called a Dutchman. Then that was ground down.

Mr. Nelson It didn't hurt anything. Heck, it took a little more time, but that's all.

Mr. Miller It took a little longer to do it, and at more cost. But at that time, we had to build stuff and they

didn't worry about cost.

They were only paying the men \$1.15 an hour for burner, welder, shipfitter

Mr. St. Clair \$1.20.

Mr. Nelson \$1.15 was what we started at. Later on, it went to \$1.20.

Mr. St. Clair We got \$1.41 on swing shift. We worked seven and a half hours, and got paid for eight.

Mr. Nelson You got 10 % [extra]. It's still the same today.

Q. Wasn't that very good money?

Mr. Miller Well, yes, at that time, it was. Considering most of us worked six days a week, and some seven.

Mr. Nelson After Pearl Harbor, it was seven days a week.

Mr. St. Clair I worked a lot of "sevens" for the first two years. Then after, that, there was hardly any overtime.

Mr. Miller There was no double time.

Mr. St. Clair Only on Sunday. Time and a half Saturday, and double time on Sunday.

Mr. Nelson and Mr. Miller I don't remember that. No.

Mr. Miller It was time and a half straight through - no double time on Sundays.

Mr. Nelson After all, when I started there it was 1941, now it's '85 - that's quite a few years ago! Things get a little fuzzy!

Q. Oh, sure! There's no reason why you should remember any of this.

Mr. St. Clair I remember it because I got it.

Q. Compared with Boeing, entering in 1942, a laborer earned \$.675 per hour and in the shipyards (they earned \$.95 per hour).⁴

Mr. St. Clair \$.625. I was offered \$.625 to go to work at Boeing.

Q. What year?

Mr. St. Clair 1942. I was already in the shipyard when I got that letter.

Mr. Miller Then compared with the shipyards, Boeing was

way underpaid.

Q. Was their union weak? Why were wages so low down there?

Mr. Nelson Well, there's something else. There was a far difference in working conditions between Boeing and the shipyards.

Q. In what ways?

Mr. Nelson Well, my gosh it was dirty. In Boeing, you'd work in a clean atmosphere, but, my gosh, you'd get in some of them ships. You hang upside down, you crawl through the double bottoms, crawl through twenty limber holes like this (showing a space perhaps 18" in diameter) placed about this high. The smoke [was awful] - ventilation was never any good at Lake Washington.

Those AVPs had eight gas tanks on them -

Mr. Miller More than that. Weren't there eight in the forward half of the ship?

Mr. St. Clair And they only had those little sucker tubes this big around. (showing a tube 3 - 4" in diameter)

Mr. Nelson You only had one manhole that was something like this, and you might have three or four men down there. The only thing you could get down there was three or four of those little suckers and it was all galvanized. Somebody would be working eight or ten feet from you, and you wouldn't recognize them unless you knew who was there, because of the smoke you were working in.

That galvanized, that was terrible stuff.

Mr. St. Clair That made you sick.

Mr. Miller I had all the crew for putting all the foundations in the engine room, and everything there was galvanized, and boy! it was a mess.

Mr. Nelson After you got off a shift, you could tell if you'd had too much of that smoke - everything tasted sweet. Anything tasted sweet - a cigarette was sweet. Everything was sweet. And then you'd wake up at, oh, say, three o'clock in the morning if you were working swing shift, and first you'd freeze and then you'd sweat, you'd freeze and then you'd sweat. And it would alternate until you finally wore it out.

Q. And no one realized that this was really dangerous?

Mr. Nelson They knew it was no good for you, but...

Mr. St. Clair They kept saying, "Drink lots of milk, drink lots of milk."

Q. Did they really?

Mr. Miller Buttermilk, wasn't it?

Mr. Nelson Some of the shops, later, when they were using galvanized, they used to feed the guys half and half. They'd give them all a quart, every day, just to counteract the galvanizing.

Q. Did it help? Does it do anything?

Mr. Nelson I don't think it did. The only think I ever found that helped was to drink a bottle of beer when you're through. I think it washed the galvanizing out of your throat! (chuckling) Apparently it worked.

Mr. Miller That galvanized was bad.

Mr. Nelson But, in later years, going through Todd's before I actually quit welding, I could not take galvanized. They say you don't throw the zinc out of your system - it stays there. In later years, I couldn't even stand the smell of it any more. I'd get sick to my stomach to the point that I'd actually throw up. I just couldn't stand any more. I guess my system just build up to a point where - that's it! Saturated!

Q. Where there many industrial accidents? Was there a first aid station?

Mr. Miller They had more or less like a small hospital.

Mr. Nelson They had a couple nurses even on swing shift - they always had at least two. I think four, at times.

Q. What kind of injuries would they be taking care of?

Mr. Nelson Well, for welders, it was mainly getting slag out of your eyes, or putting medicine in for burned eyes.

Q. From flashing?

Mr. Nelson Yes.

Mr. Miller And the crane chasers... Sometimes the cranes would drop something on somebody's foot.

Mr. St. Clair Well, that one fellow, that burner, got hurt pretty bad. They dropped a piece of pipe on the deck of the boat, and the hook came out and hit the man below his stomach and put him in the hospital. After he got well and came back again, he was burning and he hit some slag and got a piece of slag in his eye, and lost an eye. He was about the worst off one.

Mr. Miller A lot of it was from people's carelessness. That guy getting the slag - he should have been wearing his glasses.

Q. Was it carelessness? I can see in On the Ways, the

newspaper of the Lake Washington Shipyards, that they're always urging you to use your sucker and to wear your glasses. Why wouldn't people do it?

Mr. Miller Just like they don't wear seatbelts.

Mr. St. Clair There were lots of welders who wouldn't use their sucker. I had mine on my work almost all the time.

Q. Was it some kind of, "I'm a big man, I don't need these little things"?

Mr. Miller Yes. It's just like I say. They're trying to pass a law now you have to wear seatbelts. I have them. I very seldom wear them and that's my fault.

That was the trouble in the yard. They had regulations, to wear glasses, and to use suckers and blowers, but the guys said, "Oh, I don't need them. I'm tough."

Mr. Nelson But you were never called on it - it was never really enforced. Nobody would say anything.

In later years, at Todds, they would insist that you wear earplugs. Basically, I think an ear plug is a worse menace than not having them. I've got to admit this (pointing to his hearing aid) was ruled industrial damage. My hearing aids don't cost anything - it was ruled industrial damage. But if you've got your earplugs in, you can't hear anything. You can't hear somebody say, "Watch it! Get out of the way!" Nothing. You're deaf.

Of course, the shipyards aren't as noisy now as they were then. When you took that chipping and that rivetting...

Mr. St. Clair They had chipping guns going all the time, and rivetting.

Q. What were they chipping? Chipping slag?

Mr. Miller Chipping the slag off welds.

Mr. Nelson And what they'd do is - Say you got a bulkhead that's that thick. They want a 100% weld on it so they butt it. And the chipper comes in and cuts a shaving off so far, and then he goes on the other side and cuts into the weld, and you can tell it's a 100% weld. But they'd just cut the metal up. They don't do it any more - they've got an arc gouger that's ten times as fast and far easier.

Mr. St. Clair And not as noisy.

Mr. Miller And there's very little riveting going on any more. It's all welding.

Mr. Nelson The riveting they do - they use that Huck gun. It can take a 7/8" rivet, and they put it in there, they put a ferrule on it, and snap that god-dang gun and it puts it in just like a pop rivet.

Q. What's it called?

Mr. Nelson A Huck gun.

But it leaves a ferrule that sticks out, but the old rivets were flush on both sides. They can go along ten times as fast with that thing.

Q. I guess the air was bad, out on the ships welding. Was it cold out there in the wintertime?

Mr. Miller There was no heat on them. Except on the outfitting dock, [there was a shed.]

Mr. Nelson You wear clothes, just like you go out in your yard now to build a fence - it's the same deal.

Q. Outdoor construction.

Mr. St. Clair Well, you had layers of clothes on.

Mr. Miller You had to have proper clothes, otherwise you'd freeze to death.

Mr. Nelson There was nothing indoors. Well, some things, like sheet metal, was done indoors, but anything to do with the steel structure was done out in the open.

Q. Were there places you could take a break and warm up?

Mr. Nelson No, they didn't have any breaks. You'd wander off, or something, but you'd better not do it too often.

Mr. St. Clair They did have some can fires here and there. As a welder, I don't believe I ever went over and stood by one - maybe two or three times the whole time I was there.

Mr. Nelson You'd dress for it, and you had leathers on. Leather jacket and leather pants, leather gloves and everything.

Mr. Miller For the welders. But we (the shipfitters) didn't. We just had to wear heavier clothing.

Q. Where did you eat your lunch?

Mr. St. Clair Well, we had a lunchroom.

Tape 1, Side B

Q. Were you all commuting from Seattle? Did any of you live in Kirkland?

Mr. St. Clair I commuted from the west side of Green Lake to the Madison Ferry dock. We got on the LINCOLN ferry that went straight to Lake Washington Shipyard, that is, to a park that was about a quarter of a mile north of the shipyard.

Mr. Nelson That old LINCOLN was a steam turbine. You couldn't even feel that thing pull out. All the rest were

reciprocating, were diesels.

Mr. Miller I lived in Kirkland when I went to work at the yard. And then I bought a house in Bellevue, so I only had a few miles to come in.

You had to get there kind of early to find a place to park.

Mr. Nelson I used to be able to catch a bus down to Madison and take the ferry across. It was \$.10, wasn't it? \$.10 to cross Lake Washington.

Mr. St. Clair You bought a series of tickets, but I forget how much it was now.

Mr. Nelson Later, when I was an instructor, you had to come in a little early. I used to take the ferry to Kirkland, take my car across, and then I'd drive around the lake at night.

Q. Did you have any problem with gas or tires?

Mr. St. Clair Well, that was the reason we had to...

Mr. Nelson If you had a job that wouldn't fit in with the ferry, they had a deal there in the yard that would help you get gas.

Mr. Miller You had to use your coupons. I never worried about gas - I always had plenty.

Q. Did you have a car pool, or did you come by yourself?

Mr. Miller I only had three or four miles to go when I was in Bellevue. In Kirkland, I had less than a mile. I did have one fellow riding with me from Bellevue. A lot of them did have car pools. I never worried about gas - I always had plenty of coupons.

Mr. St. Clair Well, when I worked Sundays, I had to drive around the north side of the lake because there was no ferry I could depend on.

Mr. Miller That was a pretty good drive around there - twelve or fifteen miles.

Q. You may not know that all of the records for the shipyard are gone - they were destroyed in 1951. I'm asking you for things that I have no idea about. People have talked about black workers at Lake Washington Shipyard - that they were scalers and painters, but I can't find any place where black people may have lived on the East Side. Did they commute on the ferry? Did you ever see any black folks on the ferry with you?

Mr. Miller I never did see any black people living in either Kirkland or Bellevue, but we did have a few working in the yard. Not too many.

Q. Did you ever see any on the ferry?

Mr. Nelson There were very few working there. There were a few scalers, I think, and that's about all I saw at Lake Washington, at least on swing shift.

In later years, like at Todd's, for years, the only place you found colored people was as scalers.

Mr. St. Clair And then the women came in the yard about the spring of '43.

Mr. Nelson You see, that's a step below the colored people. (laughing)

Q. Yes, I was going to point that out. The sequence of ideas is kind of embarrassing!

How did women learn to weld? Were women good welders?

Mr. Nelson Oh yes, I'd say, as a welding instructor, overall man for woman, I'd say the women actually were better. Welding is a kind of funny deal - it's a game of nerves.

Mr. St. Clair It's a lot like handwriting. If you're a good handwriter, you're a pretty good welder.

Mr. Nelson But as the rod burns off, as you feed it in, you're controlling a puddle of metal, and you can hold that thing as close as $1/16$ " and up to $3/16$ ", and you've got to control that and control the metal and control it that steady. It's almost an art.

Mr. Miller Welding is a skill. It doesn't take too much in the way of knowledge to be a welder, does it?

Mr. St. Clair We had some real good stainless steel welders that were women. They had a steadier hand sometimes than a man.

Mr. Nelson I think overall they had a steadier nerve. Actually, at Lake Washington, they never put them in a rough place.

Q. (to Mr. Miller) They were up in the pattern loft, weren't they?

Mr. Miller No, we didn't have any up there.

Q. And you were there until the end of the war?

Mr. Miller No, not in the pattern loft. I was only up there for a little over a year, and then they had some old German ships they had captured in the first World War. At that particular time, there was so many ships sunk by German submarines that anything that would float, we'd fix up and get out. We worked on a lot of repair work, and repaired a lot of old ships. I went out on that for a while, then I was

switched to new construction as a leadman. I was only in the pattern loft for just a little over a year.

Q. Did you have any women working for you outside the pattern loft?

Mr. Miller The largest crew I had was 55, and I'd say thirty of them were shipfitters, and twenty five helpers, but there weren't any women helpers in my crew at all. Most of them were scalers, and things like that.

Mr. Nelson Didn't women get into sheet metal? And welding. That's about the only two things women really went into, unless it was office work.

Q. There were some grinders. And electricians.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Nelson I don't think so.

Q. I've interviewed some, so there were some there.

Mr. St. Clair I had two cousins who came out from Minnesota, and they made Kraft messengers out of them. Remember Elsie, my cousin?

Mr. Nelson I remember Edith May Brown!

Mr. St. Clair And Florence Goodman.

Mr. Nelson After they knocked down the instructors, after they were through with me as instructor, they put me in as leadman. This Edith May Brown - she was a squirrely little nut! I'd say she was homely. Did she stand five foot? I don't think so - probably four foot nine or ten [inches]. She wore glasses. Wasn't she raised by her father? Her mother was dead. She was raised in a logging camp in Minnesota, or someplace.

Mr. St. Clair Northern Minnesota.

Mr. Nelson She wore a handkerchief back here, and her billfold just like a man. She was the biggest tomboy. She had cars. She'd do her own mechanic work, and everything else.

Q. She was a welder?

Mr. Nelson Oh, yes, a good welder. A squirrely little nut.

Q. Did you know any women at Lake Washington who were femmes fatales? Women who were looking for husbands, or however one might put that? Were they just doing their job?

Mr. Miller If so, I don't know of any.

Mr. St. Clair Most of them were married.

Mr. Nelson Yes, most of them were.
Like this Bill McNamee - he came from North Dakota, and he made a deal that, after his wife went to welding school, I could be her instructor. Bill was a darn good pipe welder. Pipe welding's more or less above, because that's got to be perfect work. Bill was a pipe welder for us, but his wife came, too, and she was a good welder.

Mr. St. Clair There was one woman who was a terrific pipe welder. That black-haired woman - I don't know her name now.

Mr. Nelson I can still remember her.

Mr. St. Clair She was a burner and a welder. She could burn the pipe and weld it up, too. Black hair, and a very good looking woman. Her husband worked there in the yard, too. I don't know what he done. But she was a terrific welder.

Mr. Nelson Quite a few women were terrific welders. In fact, I'd say there were none that you had to pamper or anything. I remember the first ones that came in real well. Remember Chuck Delyea? I was out on one of the ways on one of the ships, and Chuck come out and he said, "You owe me a quart of beer."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "You got a new job. There's five women welders coming in tomorrow, and you're their instructor."

It was three little Mexican girls - cute little devils - I don't even know where they came from -

Mr. St. Clair Santa Fe. Albuquerque.

Mr. Nelson Then there was Ginger, a tall blonde girl. She came from Orange, Texas, I remember that. And there was another girl, her last name was LaPlante, I don't remember her first name. I ran around with her for a while! Chased around a little bit! But LaPlante was her last name. She had brown hair, kind of fair-skinned, medium height.

Mr. Miller I didn't have much to do with them.
I think most of the welders were on swing shift. That's where all the production welding was going on.

Mr. St. Clair Well, they kept tapping us welders, "Get this job done! Get this job done!"

Mr. Miller All we had to do with welders was that one of my shipfitters would holler for a welder to tack in, and then it was welded on the swing shift. Because then nobody bothered them - there were no shipfitters around to speak of to bother them - and you could just go ahead and weld the whole deal up, providing it was in there properly.

Mr. Nelson You know, I think it's still this way today, at Todd's, you'd get everything set up and then the swing shift would come in and do the job. There was no confusion.

There was the job, do it. And they could get the production out, because the confusion was over with.

Mr. St. Clair The welders always seemed to be the last craft to get anything done, and they always seemed to be saying, "Get in there and get that done!"

Q. Do you remember when the welders tried to break away and start their own union?

Mr. St. Clair and Mr. Nelson Oh, yes, I do!

Mr. Nelson Remember when you were doing some research (to McConaghy), and everybody down at 104 (the Boilermakers) said that it lasted a few days, a week? If you go through the papers, you'll find that it lasted over three weeks.

Q. People's memories telescope events.

Mr. Nelson The only thing that settled it was Pearl Harbor. The Thirteenth Naval District said if they didn't settle the dispute, they'd put in civil service. Then 104 gave us 541, so we were kind of a sublocal, but the welders had their own local.

Mr. St. Clair There was a fight between the welders and cutters unions, too - local 13 was trying to get in, and there was a big fight, and they knocked them out.

Mr. Nelson The guy that started this strike was a machinist from Tacoma. I don't know if you realize what the thing is. The boilermakers have got their own international, back in Kansas City, and that's more or less their union. Sheet metal had got something there - they've got their own international. The welders wanted their own international. You weren't a boilermaker, you weren't in sheet metal - you were a welder.

Mr. Miller The welders were in with the boilermakers to start with, but then they wanted to break away and form their own union.

Q. They were pipefitters, everything - they were scattered throughout every union.

Mr. Nelson I can even go back fifteen or twenty years ago and there was no one welder competent in all the phases of welding there are. Right now, it's a science of its own. There's so goddang many forms of welding, Aircomatics, heliarc, union melts - they're all different. No one man is completely competent in all phases of it. You know, we've got union melts that weld roundabouts on tanks? It's got so complicated, it's an art and a trade of its own.

Mr. Miller At Lake Washington, when the welders tried to break away from the Boilermakers Union, we came to work one morning and here's about fifty of them blocking the gate.

Mr. Nelson A picket line.

Mr. Miller A whole gang of them, just blocking the gate. And so we all stood there for a while. Finally a couple of trucks drove up with Boilermaker goon squads.

Mr. Nelson They wore "Metal Trades" buttons, but they were Boilermaker goon squads, and they were goon squads, too.⁵

Mr. Miller They got out of the trucks, and they lined up, and they said, "Well, fellas, we're going to work," and they just went through the welders.

Q. And did the welders just stand aside? There was no confrontation?

Mr. Miller Well, there were a couple, three fights.

Mr. Nelson Actually, after that, the State Patrol would have about a dozen deputies. The Boilermaker goon squads would be on one side, the welders would be on the other. We were striking. Well, actually, they had to walk through a picket line to get in, that's all.

Mr. Miller It didn't last too long.

Mr. Nelson They finally put two pickets out there, that's all.

 But it lasted at least three weeks. In Tacoma, there were quite a few welders hurt bad enough, they were put in the hospital. There was one shot on old 99 between Tacoma and Seattle. They'd run his pickup off the road, and he had two bullet holes in his head and they'd pulled his welder's hood on his head, and slapped it down on his face.

Mr. St. Clair Yeah, I think one fella got killed. And several got hurt pretty bad.

Mr. Nelson Real bad.

 They had real goon squads. They were mainly Boilermakers, but the badge they wore said "Metal Trades Council."

Q. The unions got real strong during the war. They got very, very big.

Mr. Miller Oh, yes. You had to belong to a union to work in any yard.

Q. You had worked in the yard before Pearl Harbor, and so had you, (to Mr. Miller and Mr. Nelson), did you think it got too easy to get into the union? Did the trade get diluted? Were people less skillful? Were you ever concerned that shipbuilding as a craft was not going to be what it had been, that it would become diminished in some way?

Mr. Miller Well, the union would take anybody in, as long

as you paid your initiation fee and your dues. But they all went in more or less as helpers. Then it was up to the individual leadmen and foremen in the yard to promote these helpers.

Mr. Nelson If they were capable.

Mr. Miller As soon as they'd learn how to do something.

Q. Would you say that somebody that became a journeyman in 1943 was as capable as somebody that became a journeyman in 1937?

Mr. Miller Well, I don't know anything about those years.

Q. Well, take any years you want. I'm just comparing prewar with wartime, and trying to get at what I think did happen - that it became easier to rise through the ranks and become a journeyman during wartime.

Mr. Nelson Oh, heavens, yes! They needed them, they had to. In '37, they didn't have that volume of work. Now when they had to get a ship out, when they figured a guy could more or less do it at all, passable, well, sure, you'd make a journeyman out of him. That way, you had lots of helpers and mechanics.

Mr. Miller A lot of these helpers that we'd promote up to shipfitters, a lot of it was - well, they'd come around, and you like the guy. You said, well, he knows enough about it, if he wants a job, let's just give him one job. Well, he can handle that. But, as to being a journeyman shipfitter - he wasn't. You couldn't take him off that job and put him on another job and he could do it. He couldn't. He didn't have that kind of experience. He was a specialist.

Q. He was a specialist.

Mr. Miller Well, the difference was \$.95 an hour for helper, and \$1.15 for shipfitter. (chuckling)

Q. As the war went on, did people get less well-trained or better-trained?

Mr. Nelson Well, the longer you worked at a job, you got a little better at it.

Q. Well, I was thinking of new people coming on. It looks sometimes in On the Ways as though industrial accidents were rising in the shipyard instead of falling, and it seems to me that industrial accidents would have to do with people's inexperience.

Mr. Miller Or carelessness.

Q. Or carelessness. Did it change over the course of the war, or was it the same?

Mr. St. Clair Well, I think from what I'd seen that the interest in doing your job was very high in '42 and '43, but '44 on, the interest just wasn't there as intense as it was at the start. They'd try to get twenty fellas on swing shift to bring in a welding crew. In '44, if they had a special job, they were lucky to get in ten fellas who wanted to work Sunday.

Q. Why do you think that was?

Mr. St. Clair Well, the fellas just got tired of working.

Mr. Nelson Another side to it, too. Probably the war was progressing so fast that probably the fear was over, you know? We were doing good enough in the war...

Mr. St. Clair Well, but the Battle of the Bulge was in '44, and they were getting kind of excited there when Germany was coming back at us.

Mr. Miller About working on Sundays, with us leadman, we'd have to take probably one out of four or five Sundays and be there. I didn't mind that. Then they'd say, well, we need two or three men out of your crew to work Sunday. I'd have to go around and ask ten or fifteen shipfitters!

"No, I don't want to work Sunday. It would put me in another bracket, and I'd have to pay more money to income tax."

That was a big deal.

Mr. St. Clair "Six days a week is enough for me - I'm not working seven," that's what a lot of them told me.

Of course, I was always broke, so I wanted to work Sunday.

Mr. Nelson In Todd's, we used to work double shifts. I used to work two doubles of twelve, and an eight. No, three doubles, two twelves, and an eight, not too many years ago at Todd's. I don't mind working over, but there's something about a weekend - I'd like to have a day off. It's not for religious reasons, or anything, it's just nice to relax on a day.

Mr. St. Clair Well, a lot of fellas at Todd's got to work twenty four hour shifts - how did they do that?

Q. Literally twenty four hours?

Mr. St. Clair Twenty four hours.

Mr. Miller When I quit Lake Washington, I went to work for the Army Transport in Seattle. My neighbor was a sea captain, and he -

Mr. St. Clair Is this the MSTs?

Mr. Miller Yeah. We worked on all kinds of ships - everything. Three times, I worked twenty four hours

straight. It was a job where this ship had to sail and we had to get it done. Actually, after the day shift left, we could get more work accomplished than we could while the rest of them were there.

Q. You guys have worked other places since Lake Washington Shipyards, how would you compare Lake Washington with Todd's, in whatever areas seem important to you - management, productivity. You start, Mr. St. Clair.

Mr. St. Clair Well, I think Todd's had a definitely better system because they was at it longer. I know I worked on a lot of new plate on the hulls, a lot of double bottom work, that they had better system of going about it. At Lake Washington, we didn't have that type of repair. I had to work just as hard at Lake Washington as I've had to anyplace else, really. I think the hardest work I ever done in welding was working in shops. Shops is your hardest work. The shops had your work all piled up there, and you go to work and do it. You never stop.

Q. How would you compare Lake Washington to other places you've worked in terms of quality?

Mr. Miller The only places I've worked have been Lake Washington and Army Transport, and I worked for two years down at Puget Sound Sheet Metal. Once we got organized and got to rolling at Lake Washington, I think they put out a heckuva lot of work.

Mr. Nelson I agree with you. It took a little while to get them organized from a small boat works to suddenly explode, it took a lot of fumbling around to get things organized. Once they did, I'd say there were a fairly efficient shipyard. I really would say they were.

Mr. Miller Lake Washington had a pretty good record.

Mr. Nelson Todd's is what was originally Skinner and Eddy in World War I. Todd's more or less bought out Skinner and Eddy. And there was a shipyard of nothing but wooden ships, and it went right on through and became Todd's.

The old boss of the machine shop over at Todd's, Chuck McClellan, he served his apprenticeship at Skinner and Eddy during World War I, and actually the guy that had what they called the outside machine shop, this kind of little annex deal where they did certain types of work. Now what the heck was his name? He was with Chuck McClellan. He was a marvellous guy - course we're talking about Todd's now!

Q. Yeah, don't talk about Todd's! (laughing)

We've talked about women workers at the shipyard, and we've talked a little bit about black workers at the shipyard. You've mentioned a lot of people from out of state, people from all over the country.

Mr. Nelson I'd swear at that time, the hardest thing was to find anybody from Seattle.

Mr. St. Clair Most of the workers came from northern Texas, some from Oklahoma, North and South Dakota, and Minnesota, and eastern Washington and Idaho. That seemed to be the core of where our people came from.

Mr. Miller They just didn't have enough people in Seattle.

Mr. Nelson Even among the men, I'd say the majority were out of state.

Mr. Miller We'd get a few young draft age fellas in there who would go to work in the yard to get excluded from the draft.

Mr. St. Clair In 42, I worked with lots of fellas who said, "Oh, I'm not gonna be drafted, I'm not gonna be drafted. I've got this wrong with me and that wrong with me. I gotta have special glasses," and this and that. And they all got taken. Except me, I slipped through somehow. But I was a 1-B.

Mr. Miller I had one helper that was goofing off all the time. And you know on these seaplane tenders, they first started out on these gas tanks putting a cover over the manhole and then filling it with water to check and see whether the welds leaked or not. They'd fill that whole compartment with water, and later on they used air. And then put soap and water to see if it would bubble with a leak, and then reweld it.

I had this one helper, and he goofed off. And I'd just started to have this one tank filled with water. We welded this plate over the manhole cover and put the tap on and put the water in there. I couldn't find this guy. Finally, I got scared that he'd gone down in the place and went to sleep. So I had them cut the plate off, went down there, and by gosh, he was down there. He'd have drowned.

I was so mad. I just hauled him out of there and took him up to the personnel office and said, "Get rid of this guy."

All the way up, he cried, "Oh, I'll be drafted, I'll be drafted."

I said, "Well, that's where you ought to be - maybe they'll keep you awake."

He would have drowned - but I just got scared. I had nightmares of that several nights after that.

Mr. Nelson I know something of the same idea. One time at Todd's, there was a quartermaster that went through the double bottoms. Every two feet, there's a manhole -
Mr. Miller A limber hole.

Mr. Nelson - you crawl through, and that's the way you go. He went down there and just went through to make sure that everything was done, and he came back to the manhole and they were dogging down the manhole. And he didn't have anything - he didn't have anything but with his flashlight he hammered on the lid enough that the guy above managed to hear him and

take the manhole plate off. Otherwise, he'd have gone to sea in a tank!

Q. Talking about people sleeping, when I've talked to people who worked on the grid, they always say that if there was any loafing, sleeping, card playing, or drinking in Lake Washington Shipyard, it must have happened out on the ships. Did much of that happen out on the ships?

Mr. Miller I never saw any of it.

Mr. St. Clair Not during work.

Mr. Miller I never heard of anybody playing cards during work.

I did down at the Army Transport.

Mr. St. Clair We did in South Shop - we played checkers because we didn't have anything to do.

Mr. Nelson I've only known one case of a poker game, and it was in the Whirly at the far end. There was a welder, and I missed him once in a while. Finally, a guy warned me, "He's playing poker up in that Whirly."6

Tape 2, Side A

Mr. Nelson That's the only case I know of of a gambling game. Somebody finally tipped me off that's where that guy disappeared to. I went over to that Whirly, climbed up and there he was playing poker. The Whirly chaser was supposed to be the guy that would warn them. They had this guy called a Whirly chaser. There was a guy operating the crane, but this guy down below hooks stuff for it and unhooks stuff for it. He handles the rigging down below. There were about four guys in there, and one was the welder.

If this Whirly chaser needed to warn anybody, he'd hammer on the leg of the Whirly, and you could hear it up there.

I went up there, and told Pete, "You'd better come with me. I'll give you this one chance, but don't ever do it again." And I don't think he ever did.

I guess I should have fired him then, but he was an awfully good welder, and as far as I know, he never did it again.

That's the only gambling I remember [at Lake Washington.] Later, at Todd's, they'd gamble up in the locker room, but I don't remember at Lake Washington...

Mr. Miller Most of the gambling at Lake Washington that went on was on the ferries coming over. That's where a lot of them lost a paycheck - there was some pretty good games going on, I guess. I don't know because I just heard about it.

Mr. St. Clair There were some pretty good dice games going at Todd's. I never even seen them play dice at Lake Washington.

Mr. Nelson They used to play 4,5,6 all the time at Todd's, in the locker room. Sometimes they'd go to darn near morning.

I never seen anything like that at Lake Washington.

Mr. Miller We had enough leadmen that we went around and kept checking on all our crew. There were times I had men on three different shifts, and I needed to contact all of them. We had to keep on the move all the time. There wasn't anything like that going on that I ever did see.

Q. You had no trouble with people on your shifts smuggling in alcohol?

Mr. Miller Once in a while.

Mr. St. Clair Some of them would have a pint on them.

Mr. St. Clair Or they'd carry it in their thermos in their lunchbucket.

Mr. Nelson There was some - I don't think it was outrageous. You could usually figure that the last day before Christmas or the last day before New Year's - it was kind of overlooked, within reason. But other than that, there was some that went on but nothing to the point of being...

Mr. St. Clair Somebody in the crew might have a pint, and by the time everyone took a swallow, that pint would be gone. You wouldn't be getting much.

Mr. Nelson About the only time you'd probably see that is Friday night.

Mr. St. Clair During the war, you could only get two bottles of liquor a week, wasn't it?

Mr. Miller A month.

Mr. St. Clair Two bottles a month.

Mr. Miller So that didn't last long.

Mr. St. Clair You couldn't get very drunk on that.

Mr. Miller Unless you drank it all at once.

Q. Getting back to the people from out of state, I've heard stories about Okies and Arkies that curl my hair. Were they true? Were they uneducated people?

Mr. St. Clair Well, there were as many here as came in, I think.

Mr. Nelson Yes, there was just as many here as came in.

Mr. Miller Well, quite a few of them was uneducated.

Mr. St. Clair Yeah, we had Oklahoma Bill and guys like that. They were nice people, as far as I was concerned.

Mr. Miller On my crew, the thing I did with a lot of them was to make them helpers. They never did get anywhere but being a helper. A helper didn't have too much to do on a ship.

Mr. Nelson All in all, they were about the same as you'd run into here.

But, I think, we always made fun of it. The Grapes of Wrath stuff, you know. My wife's from Oklahoma. Of course, that doesn't let her off the hook.

Q. Did you ever feel that there was any competition for your job?

Mr. Miller I never did.

Mr. Nelson What do you mean?

Q. Competition for your job. Women coming into the workforce, out of state people coming into the workforce, and then all the soldiers would be coming home someday.

Mr. Nelson No, and if you got a good woman welder, you'd kind of appreciate it. The women not only held their own, they might be a smidgeon better, but I'll also say they didn't put them in the dirtiest work, in the roughest work. There's some places that are just impossible. You get some of those darn engine foundations - it'll take you fifteen minutes to creep around there to start welding, and you'd weld right over yourself. Sometimes your dark glass wouldn't last over fifteen minutes. There'd be so much slag on it that you'd have to change it. They tried to keep women out of rough work like that. But on clear running, they were good.

Mr. Miller I think there was some competition there. Some shipfitter would think he should be promoted to a leadman, but every once in a while you'd get somebody like that. You're bound to. I don't care where you work. You're bound to get somebody that wants your job. Most of them that did, didn't have the experience so it wasn't too bad.

Q. During the war, was there much patriotism in the shipyard? Did people buy bonds?

All together Oh yes!

Mr. Nelson You'd get them right through your paycheck. You'd sign up for them. It was vogue, and it was a good way of saving. I think nearly everybody was taking bonds out. You just signed up and they'd take it out of your paycheck. You never even missed it.

Mr. Miller Then when you got enough accumulated, they brought you the bond. I think I had about twenty five.

(There is a fair amount of noise in this section as the microphone is moved around.)

Mr. St. Clair One time they made a drive on buying bonds. Remember Charlie Overland? He said, "Roy, let's go up and buy a \$500.00 bond, and we both did."

Mr. Nelson There's something that might be interesting. When women started coming in, they more or less put them out on the slab. The slab is where you'd fabricate, like, a deck section. Steel all over, and then they'd lay the frames on it and the gussets. They used to have women out there. It was out in the open, easy work.

Charlie Overland was leadmen over the women on swing on the slab. He was a nice guy, but that guy would walk around and grouch and grumble. And I think all the women were scared of him - they worked like fools. Charlie finally married one of them! But there was no hanky-panky around there - old Charlie kept everything under control.

Mr. Miller We had very few women on the ships. Most of that work was pretty heavy work.

Q. I've heard a story about a woman who was a pipefitter's assistant on one of the ships [at Lake Washington]. A pipefitter's helper. And there was a piece of pipe in a vise, and the man she was working with said, "Go get that piece of pipe." She could not open that vise, she could not get it undone, and she had to ask for help, and she was so embarrassed at having to get help to open the vise up so she could do her job.

Mr. St. Clair Well, that could be.

Q. What do you remember best about Lake Washington Shipyard?

Mr. Nelson I enjoyed working there.

Mr. St. Clair Well, I think most people did. It was a homey place.

Mr. Nelson It was a friendly place.

Mr. St. Clair I would still be there if they'd kept going.

Mr. Nelson Actually, if you can say this about any job, that you look forward to going to work, it's a good place to work. If you look forward to going to work.

Mr. Miller The only reason I quit there was on account of this neighbor of mine who was a sea captain down at MSTs. He was the one that talked me into going in down there and I had a heckuva job getting out of the yard. Rich had me up in his

office and everything else.

I really took that job down there because I could get more experience, working on everything from tugs on up to big transports. We worked on everything, every size ship. We not only worked on that pier where we were, we covered the whole waterfront.

Mr. St. Clair You know, there was an outfit called Olsen and Wing, ever hear of them?

Q. Did you guys think that Lake Washington Shipyard would close at the end of the war?

Mr. St. Clair Well, it did.

Q. But did you think it would?

Mr. St. Clair Well, I thought it would have to come to a halt sometime, and it did. A week after V-J day, they laid off almost all of swing shift, and they laid off an awful lot of days, and they only held less than a thousand people - about 800 people, from what I hear.

Mr. Nelson I requested a lay-off in the last part of '44, towards the end of '43. In welding instruction, they didn't need then. They gave me a crew of welders, but when they got down where they was going to start laying off leadmen, I asked old Dave to lay me off first. For the simple reason that back in '42, I got my 1-A in the Army, I was 25 and single. Then I got my call to go in for my physical, then I got my induction papers. At that time, I was welding, and I went to my leadman and told him I was gonna quit - I had thirty days to live it up. And he said, "Wait a minute," and the quartermaster came down, and Dave Finson came down, and he said, "Disregard it. Forget it, just for a few days."

I got a notice from the Draft Board to disregard my induction papers. It went on like that - I got another 1-A. I didn't pay any attention to it - I just kept working. Then I got a 1-A from the state Board of Appeal that went on for about a month. Then I got a 2-B, and it didn't say where it came from - it had to be federal.

Later on, Morgan said, "I wish to hell you were half as good a welder as I told them you were!"

I had a 2-B from that time on - I'd get it two or three months ahead of time. I guess I had a guilty feeling, and when they started knocking down leadmen, I asked them to knock me off first.

One time [there was] a guy married with two kids, with six in his crew. I had eight in my crew, and they gave me his six, and he went in the Army - married with two kids! When they knocked me off, I went in the Merchant Marine, and I sailed the Merchant Marine until the end of the war.

Mr. Miller To the leadmen, the Navy came around trying to recruit for the Seabees. And they gave quite a talk in the yard, and contacted a bunch of us, but there were three of us that were all leadmen, and one of them was Heine Knust's

son-in-law. Knust was the superintendent of the shipfitters. So we were all signed up for the Seabees. We'd all get a good rating. We'd get a chief's rating at least out of it, but the yard wouldn't let us go.

Mr. Nelson I got up to junior engineer, but you had to have eighteen months sea time to sit for your thirds. I lacked it by three months and I got married. Sea time was from the time you leave port until you hit port again. I lacked three months from my eighteen months. I'd have rather had that third engineer's license than a college degree.

Q. What was the security like at the shipyard? Was there a fence around it? Were there guards?

All together Oh, yes.

Mr. Nelson There's another strange story. Les Finson was head of security in Todd's. He used to be a deputy sheriff in Mt. Vernon. I knew him up there in Mt. Vernon. He was Dave Finson's brother.

Mr. St. Clair They carried time clocks around to certain stations where you had to punch in and punch out on the time clock.

Q. Did they (the guards) wear a uniform?

Mr. St. Clair Yes, a uniform, a badge and a cap.

Mr. Miller When I first went to work for Lake Washington, they didn't have the gates where you'd check in, but later on they put all those gates in. There were always security guards there watching to see if you weren't carrying a bottle in, or something. Every once in a while, they'd have a lunch bucket check at the end of the shift. Gosh, a couple of times, after they went through, you'd look back there at the blacktop in the yard and here were all kinds of pieces of steel and tools. Guys had dumped their lunchbuckets out before they went through the check.

Mr. St. Clair One shift, they were dumping chisels and steel and light bulbs.

Oh, that was a scream one time. We were all laughing so hard.

Mr. Miller You'd look out on the blacktop, and there was just everything!

Mr. St. Clair Chisels made a lot of noise when you dropped them, too.

Q. I can see these guys walking out with lunchbuckets they could barely carry.

Mr. Miller The burner hose was two pieces of hose taped together - one for the oxygen, one for the acetylene. One guy had wrapped thirty or forty feet of it around his waist,

and then put his jacket over and buttoned it up to cover it. He was right ahead of me in the line and there was an end of it sticking out that far (6") below his coat that he hadn't tucked in. The security guard saw that, and he just reached and spun that guy around! (laughing) He was trying to get away with thirty or forty feet of that burner hose, though what the heck you'd ever do with it, I don't know.

They were trying to steal a lot of stuff.

Mr. Nelson The worst one I know didn't happen at Lake Washington, but at Todd Shipyards. A guy went over to the paint shop and he wanted a quart of this high heat aluminum that'll take 500 degrees. And the paint shop filled him up a quart can and hammered the lid down. It was colder than heck in the winter. He just put it under his shirt inside his coat and before he got to the gate, when he got to the timeclock, the heat from his body expanded the paint and blew the lid off that high heat aluminum. He was walking out leaving two trails of aluminum paint. That stuff is extremely caustic, and he ended up in the hospital for about three days. It burned him that bad.

Actually, at Lake Washington, maybe guys swiped stuff occasionally, but nothing major. The major stuff was later, in other shipyards!

Q. The security that was in the shipyard was not just to prevent theft, but to prevent sabotage, one would think.

Mr. Nelson Yes, I believe that was the main [point] because to get in the gate, you had to have a badge. It was more or less against sabotage.

Q. Did you ever see any evidence of any kind of sabotage, or were you ever concerned yourself that such a thing was even possible?

Mr. Miller No, never. I think most everyone was quite patriotic.

Mr. Nelson I think the majority of them really truly were patriotic.

I think it shook everybody when the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor. It shook everybody right to their shoes.

Mr. Miller Heckuva lot more patriotism then than there is now.

Mr. St. Clair I'd say so, though our patriotism seems to be coming back a little now. But I think patriotism was really down there for a while. Viet Nam war was just real bad.

Mr. Miller But during that period when we worked in the yard, there was a lot of patriotism. Everybody did everything they could.

Mr. Nelson Everybody bought bonds and everything.

Mr. St. Clair And nobody commented anything about communism, either. Nobody liked that. Those that were communists, shut up.

Mr. Nelson Do you remember at the early part of the war, they rebuilt three Russian fishing boats? Actually, we got to talking to them - quite a few in the crew spoke some English - and I remember the comment one of these Russians said. He said, "If the world knew, the United States would never have to fight another war. What they pay their soldiers, you could hire all the soldiers in the world to fight for you."

Yes, they were Russian fishing boats, and, gee, they were rust buckets.

Mr. St. Clair Yeah, I remember those.

Q. They're supposed to have been real dirty boats to work on, too.

Mr. St. Clair From what they say, yes, but I was never on them.

Mr. Nelson They were rust buckets and we completely rebuilt them. At that time, we still had that Murmansk run hauling supplies to Russia, you know.

Mr. Miller When I was at the MSTS, they formed the Coast Guard reserve. They came around and wanted volunteers. Well, we worked one shift a week, we were on six hours and off six hours. We had to go and inspect a lot of these Russian ships, and I'll tell you some of them were awful dirty. They were the dirtiest ships we ever were on.

And one time, two of us dressed in Coast Guard uniforms, carrying a 38 revolver, we went aboard this one Russian ship to inspect it. So the captain and chief mate invited us in to have a cup of coffee. We got in there in the officers' mess, and those guys tried to pump us for everything they could get out of us. We were pretty dumb. But they were asking us questions about this and that, trying to get all the information they could. What they'd do with it afterward, I don't know.

On the Russian ships, the main officers like captain, first mate, chief engineer could all speak pretty fair English. They were always after all the information they could get out of you.

Mr. St. Clair I used to see them over at Lake Washington. There was one older fella, he had a set of stainless steel teeth. Actually. I heard later that they could give you something like that, and they had several other choices, too.

Mrs. St. Clair They were our allies, at that time. We had a lend-lease program going on with the Russians.

Mr. St. Clair We had a Russian freighter in there (Lake Washington), and we could see they had a couple of girls in the crew. You could see them out dancing on the aft upper

deck. They had some music going of some kind, and you could see two or three of them dancing. The men danced with each other, too. There'd be eight or ten couples out there dancing, and there'd only be two women.

This one little Russian girl, she'd go up to the restaurant and buy ice cream or candy bars or whatever.
Q. So they lived on their ship while it was being repaired?

Mr. Miller Oh, yeah, they wouldn't let them off.

Mr. St. Clair But they could go up to the restaurant. They couldn't go out of the yard.

Q. Do you remember the Jump-Off Club?

All three No.

Q. It was something that the shipyard ran to outfit dayrooms in the Aleutian islands. There was a big drive in On the Ways that thousands and thousands of dollars was raised to buy things to send to these Navy dayrooms.

All three I never heard of it. No, me either.

Mr. Miller I quit in the latter part of '43 - it might have gone on after that.

Q. Actually, the Jump-Off club began in Spring of '43. But, anyway...

I have wondered what management at Lake Washington Shipyard was like - management must have expanded as much as the workforce did. Where did these talented people come from? Were they talented? Were they capable managers? What were they like to work for and to work with?

I know Voinot and Van Sant were there before the war; Burckhardt owned the place, but he was never around.

Mr. Miller Well, of course, Eric Rich was the supervisor, the main man in the yard. And Heine Knust was for the shipfitters; Paul Morgan for the welders. Grover Tachell with the burners. All those fellas were pretty well experienced - they'd worked in that yard for several years. Believe me, they saw that the work was put out. They didn't let anybody slack off on anything. They were around all the time.

A lot of the foreman were picked up from somewhere here and there, and pretty well experienced.

Mr. Nelson They knew their work.

Mr. Miller From there on down, was mostly a newer bunch like myself that were trained in the yard.

Mr. Nelson Joe Doyle, who was head of the boilermakers on swing - this is hearsay, but I believe it - he served his apprenticeship in the Clyde shipyards in Scotland when they were hand rivetting ships. They didn't have rivetting guns, they used a hammer to rivet ships.

Mr. St. Clair Well, apparently, they did before the war at Todd's, too. They had those long hammers and drove hand rivets. Now Cec Kirkton, he worked at Todd's before the war, and he came to work one morning and they said, "Oh, there's an awful accident out on the boat out there!"

One fella was swinging this hammer, and I guess his helper done something. He got his head in the way of the hammer. He took his hammer and drove it right into his head and killed him.

This was just before the start of the war.

Mr. Nelson They did hand rivet, but now they use a riveting gun. It takes a damn good man to run one of them guns.

Mr. Miller And a buckler, too.

Mr. Nelson They call them a "90," and it whirls around and you shape the rivet with it. But there aren't many men who are powerful enough to do it, to hold that darn thing.

It was about ten years ago - you know, they don't have any riveters anymore! They did have to run some hot rivets, and it wasn't too many of them - maybe a hundred. And he was there three days running a hundred and they paid him premium pay just to go down there and run those hundred hot rivets. In early years, you'd better run that off before lunch! They paid him premium pay. They couldn't find men that could handle hot rivets anymore.

(a short discussion of modern riveting...)

Q. Did you think that your crew got faster and faster as the years went on?

Mr. Miller Oh, they had more experience. As far as being faster, you could only work just so fast on a job. A lot of times, you had to have a burner, and you couldn't get one for a while. You had to stand around and wait. Or you couldn't get a tackler. They didn't have enough tackers or burners to keep the shipfitters...

Mr. St. Clair Tackers are welders. (who do preliminary "tacking" before permanent and thorough welding)

Mr. Miller Actually that was our big drawback a lot of the time - waiting to get a burner, waiting to get a welder to do a tacking job.

Q. Did you have much trouble with people being drafted out of the shipyard as they were trained?

Mr. St. Clair They sure pulled them out fast in '42. They brought in a big gang of guys and they'd go out pretty fast.

Q. But you didn't see that. (to Mr. Miller)

Mr. Miller I didn't lose any off my crew because they were all pretty well experienced, and the draft board would

let them keep their draft status.

(noise on the tape as the microphone moves around)

Mr. Nelson I think the shipyards could pretty well hold whoever they thought was a good mechanic. Actually, they needed ships as bad as they needed men - probably worse.

Mr. St. Clair That's why they had the women come in. They knew they could do a lot of the smaller jobs.

Tape 2, Side B

Mr. Miller ...shipfitters working on those big gun mounts for the 5" guns, the one on the bow and the one on the stern. That was the most particular job of the whole works, because that had to be just perfect. And those two shipfitters were good. They knew their job, and that's all they worked on were just those two rings for the gun mounts. After they got it in, they'd bring in the surveyors, and they'd put the instruments on and check and see that it was all perfectly level according to the ship.

You see, when the ship was on the ways, it was setting at an angle, so you can't put just a level on there, and say that's it. You had to use what we called a declevity board. It's a shape that starts out at a minus and goes up to what the drop was on those ways. You put that down first, and then put your level on top of that.

Mr. Nelson It's gotta be build at an angle, because it's gotta slide into the water. It's gotta go downhill!

Mr. Miller I remember the engineers made all those declevity boards, and we had to watch them like a hawk. Couldn't lose them.

Q. For welding plates, they used to use line-heating after the plates were welded to take the buckle out when the thing was heated too fast...

Mr. Nelson They had shrinkers.

Q. Now was that something that went on throughout the war, or did people get better, and you didn't need shrinkers any more?

Mr. St. Clair You always had to shrink steel. Every time you heat it, it's going to curl or buckle.

Mr. Miller These were just burning torches with a big tip on them and a circle of water. They'd just shoot that heat in there and heat that water...

Mr. Nelson They'd heat a spot and move over and the water would cool that part and shrink the plate.

Mr. St. Clair Then they'd come in with long hammers and pound on them. That hurt my ears more than anything!

Mr. Miller That's why you're wearing a hearing aid. And me, too.

(All three men wear hearing aids.)

Mr. St. Clair That was the hardest, sharpest noise I ever heard in my life.

Mr. Miller The leadman for the shrinkers at Lake Washington was pretty sharp. He'd come in and mark these spots and the shrinker would put his torch on there.

Mr. Nelson He'd mark the lines and ... It was an art. Remember those two burners, Bob Gillette and Bob Williams? They were both burners and they both worked at Lake Washington Shipyard at that time. They're both dead now, but they finished up at Todd's.

Mr. St. Clair Gillette, yes. And we've still got one down at Todd's yet. He's one of the big bosses.

Mr. Nelson That was his son-in-law, Pierre. He's Bob Gillette's son-in-law.

Mr. St. Clair This other fella, that's one of the big bosses at Todd's, I remember him burning at Lake Washington.

Mr. Miller You remember Grover Tachell? Tachell was the burner foreman [at Lake Washington]. For years after he got out of Lake Washington, he was with Chicago Bridge and Iron putting up these big water tanks all over the country.

Mr. Nelson Who was the boss on the hot slab? On swing? Wasn't it Firpo? Wasn't he once a sparring partner for Jack Dempsey? He was a big man, weighed - he was at Todd's, but he started at Lake Washington on the hot slab.

Mr. St. Clair Hostack was on the hot slab, too. Not Al, the well-known fighter, but one of his older brothers.

Mr. Nelson He was a big man, and on a bet, he stood on the deck, went through a 16" porthole at window height and came out the other side. For a man that big?!

Mr. Miller Al Hostack, the fighter, worked over at Lake Washington, too. His older brother was on the hot slab on swing. Al came over there, and at that particular time he was punchdrunk, and they didn't keep him more than a couple three days.

(a discussion of local boxing and boxers in the thirties)

Mr. Nelson I know Steele* had a resort out at Steele Lake, and people went out there. There was a sheet metal worker - a big guy - he went out there and the attendant didn't like where he parked. I think the guy was kind of drunk anyway, and the attendant got mad and told him to move it. He told

* a champion fighter

him to go to heck, or words similar, and Steele came running out and told him to move it. The sheet metal worker hauled off and knocked him cold, and the P-I paper said the next day, "In the fight between Steele and Hostack, we're gonna bet on the big sheet metal worker!"

Mr. St. Clair I remember when I first went in the yard, they had cock fights here and there around Kirkland. And about the second big cock fight they had, they came out and pinched the whole crowd. I remember that ~~they~~ took them down and fined them.

Mr. Nelson I think in about '42, the shipyard used to have a dance out in Juanita, just for the people in the shipyard. I never did go to one, but I guess they were quite an affair.

Mr. St. Clair Once, my mom and I got in our car and went around as far as Kenmore, but it was so foggy, you couldn't see two feet in front of you. So we turned around and came back home. We said the heck with this.

Mr. Nelson I think they used to have it once a week.

Mr. St. Clair It was Saturday night, or Sunday morning.

Q. It was right after the swing shift ended, wasn't it?

Mr. Nelson It was in a hall there in Juanita.

Mr. St. Clair We went home [after work], mom and I. And we cleaned up and drove as far as Kenmore, but that was it. We couldn't see nothing.

Mr. Nelson Do you remember a welder they called Whispering Johnson? He was a good welder -

Q. He had a great name.

Mr. Nelson He was kind of a pudgy guy and he wore a sock hood, and all of us wore hard hoods. I don't think I ever saw him wear gloves when he was welding - his hands were raw. He was a good welder. They called him Whispering Johnson. When he talked normally, you could hear him a half a block away, and when he got drunk, that was something else.

Mr. Miller We had poets, and we had painters. I inherited one painter as a helper. One day that guy brought some colored crayons to work and put paintings on one of the bulkheads. He was terrific!

Mr. Nelson There was ^a guy there who with just plain old chalk had practically a whole room decorated, and was good enough an artist -

Q. Maybe it was the same guy.

Mr. Miller He drew some beautiful paintings.

Mr. Nelson Some of it was slightly risque, but I guess it was good enough that people from the office came down to see the work.

Mr. Miller He was good.
 There was quite a write-up in the paper about him. He was some fairly well-known artist and in order not to be drafted he -

Q. Who was your poet? How'd you get a poet?

Mr. Miller Oh, heck, we had everything.

Mr. Nelson This guy we were talking about, Chuck Delyea he was quite a musician. And he was out there somewhere, and he heard somebody singing that New Orleans blues. He said, "That guy had a voice you couldn't even believe."

 But anyway, he finally figured it was coming out of the restroom down there. He went down a couple times, and all he ever saw was some little old colored guy there. He kinda laid for him, and that was the guy that was singing. He said, "Honest to Gosh, that guy had a voice - he should have made a living at that, not sweeping out restrooms."

Mr. Miller They had people from all walks of life working in the shipyard.

Mr. St. Clair We had one fellow that was on the ferry and he had been a performer on stage and he was a cowboy singer.

Mr. Nelson Yeah! He'd roll a cigarette and he'd never get it lit. He'd light a match and he'd keep on singing, and the match would go out, and he'd light another match.

Mr. St. Clair Coming across on the ferry, he sang quite a few songs for us several times. He performed at the Radisson Hotel, in Minneapolis. He said he went in there on his horse, rode in and sang a song in there.

Mr. Nelson Hey, you remember down at the Paramount Theatre talent from the local shipyards put on a complete show? And by gosh, there was some real talent. And they just came out of the shipyards, not just Lake Washington, but all the shipyards.

 A lot of Lake Washington people were there, and they had, I'd say, an hour and a half program. It was really good.

Mr. St. Clair Lake Washington had most of the performers on it.

Mr. Nelson You know there was a guy that sang, "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer." Gosh he was good. He was a high school teacher when I went to high school in Sedro Woolley.

 They had a striptease artist. You couldn't have it without a striptease. And actually this gal got down to practically nothing, and she tore her bra off, but it was

a man! (chuckling) You didn't have the slightest suspicion it was a man, until he pulled his bra off, lifted his wig, and said, "Hiya, bub!"

Mr. St. Clair I never saw any of those shows.

They picked a queen, and Lake Washington didn't have a chance on that. Sea-Tac had a couple of gals that were real good lookers, I guess.

Mr. Nelson I don't remember what these two gals worked at but I think it was in '42 or '43. They came in dressed so sexy that the supervision sent them home and told them to change clothes. They weren't welders, I know that! They might have been sheet metal or something. They came in, and boy, they had slacks and sweaters.

Q. At Lake Washington?

Mr. Nelson At Lake Washington.

Mr. St. Clair Well, you'd know more about that sort of thing than I would. I mean, he got around! (laughing).

Mr. Nelson I know the supervision on swing told them to go home and change clothes and come back to work.

Mr. St. Clair I know Charlie Overland had a gal there, and she was a real good looking gal, and she told several of us that she could make more money in the bushes at Madison Park than she could make in Lake Washington Shipyards. And she didn't last very long in the shipyards, either! I don't know where she went. Back to the bushes, I guess.

Mr. Nelson Overall, though, most of them were real good people. The majority of the women worked with their husbands, had a husband working in the yard, too.

Mr. St. Clair There were a few single gals, but most of them were married.

Q. Weren't there some women waiting for husbands overseas?

Mr. Miller Yeah, a lot of them.

Mr. Nelson What else do you need to know? (to McConaghy)

Q. Well, there's really one final question, and that was what were the working conditions like? A couple of people have talked about - I don't want to call it dysentery, but illness in the yard because of the water.

Mr. St. Clair We took salt pills in the summertime. But outside of that... The welders would work in heat, you know.

Mr. Nelson But outside of that, we wore these heavy leather clothes to protect you.

Mr. Miller One bad thing that I remember going around

there was something they called "shipyard eye." I got it, and good night, a lot of them. It must have been something you touched, and then if you happened to rub your eye or your face. But your eyes got all inflamed, and they had quite a siege of that for a while.

Q. How was that treated and how long did it last?

Mr. Miller Well, we went to the clinic, and they put different things in your eyes.

Mr. Nelson Actually, the first aid department was pretty good. On swing, it was exceptionally good.

Mr. Miller They had a good first aid station.

Mr. Nelson They usually had three nurses, didn't they?

Mr. St. Clair We had to go upstairs to our locker, and that was always clean. Nice big locker.

Mr. Nelson The locker rooms were swept and kept clean and everything. The cafeteria - well, basically, I never ate there. You could come in early and get a cup of coffee and sit around the table and bs a little bit.

Mr. St. Clair If you didn't bring your lunch, you could buy your lunch there at the restaurant. And they put on movies for us - not every day, but once in a while.

Mr. Nelson They were more or less patriotic ones, if I remember right.

Mr. St. Clair They showed the Dempsey-Firpo fight - I remember that.

Q. When you were driving, did you ever have any trouble parking? Did you have a special spot?

Mr. Miller Well, the leadmen and foremen had one area they could park in. So we didn't have too much trouble, but a lot of the other workers that drove parked out on the street and there were cars scattered for half a mile or more each way from the yard.

Mr. St. Clair We took the ferry from Madison Park and had to park on the street someplace, maybe two or three blocks from the ferry dock.

Mr. Miller In Madison Park, there was no parking lot.

Mr. Nelson One thing I can remember about parking. Just down and across the street, just down the road, there was a parking lot and there was kind of a big clay mudhole on one side. You didn't get close to that because you were stuck if you got in there. But you know there was one old guy who used to come in and park right in the middle of that thing. He'd climb in and get fired up and away he'd go - he had a

Model T Ford! He had a Model T Ford! And he'd park right in the middle of that mudhole, waddle up to that thing, fire it up and away he'd go. He had no trouble at all.

Mr. Miller I used to have trouble getting out of that parking lot. I went to a house right across from the yard, and got permission from the people who owned it. I had to pay them so much a week.

Mr. St. Clair They were collecting on that. They had a bulldozer in there and cleaned that off once. They made a parking lot out of it.

That lady, her husband worked in the yard, I think.

Mr. Miller And it only cost \$1.00 a week, I think.

Mr. Nelson Right next to the yard on the north side was a parking lot. It was close, but when you had a crew, you had to line up a half hour early. So the real concentration of cars wasn't there, and you could always get a good parking place.

Mr. Miller There was actually no parking down in the yard.

Mr. St. Clair Unless you were a VIP of some kind. That property is owned by Skinner and Eddy.

Mr. Miller The Seahawks are in there now.

Mr. St. Clair That's why the Seahawks are in there. Skinner is part owner with the Nordstroms.

Q. While you were there, was there any building construction going on in the early part of the war? The new ways, and all

Mr. St. Clair I think that was all built when I got there.

Mr. Nelson The PATHFINDER was on the ways -

Mr. Miller Well, they only had one ways.

Mr. Nelson But they ended up with three.
I don't remember...

Mr. St. Clair Well, we were working swing shift and a lot of that work was done on day shift.

Mr. Miller They built that whole fabricating shed. It was large. And they built the ways.

Mr. Nelson Speaking of another job, didn't they have some torpedo boats in there at one time? They had about four of them. They had a plywood hull.

Mr. St. Clair Oh, PT boats! Well, they built them at a wood yard just north of the shipyards, about a half a mile. We didn't build them in the yard.

Q. You mean at the Ballinger Boat Works.

Mr. Nelson I think they brought them in there to do something with them but I swear they were in the yard at one time. They laid kind of over by the sheds on the north side, three or four of them.

Mr. Miller Any of those ships that are built, you first have to loft them. You first have to draw all the lines for everything for the ships, and then all your patterns are made off all those different lines on the flat floor up in the loft. In order to build anything, whatever size it is, you have to design and loft it before you can make the patterns to make the ship. The only one we worked on was the seaplane tender.

For the Navy, the only ships Lake Washington ever built were the seaplane tenders.

Mr. St. Clair I was only on the PATHFINDER once, and that's because the guard let me go on and look around before it was commissioned. So I got to go all through the PATHFINDER by myself.

Mr. Nelson I got to do some tinker work on it a few times, small welding jobs here and there.

Mr. St. Clair This old guard said if you want to take a look, go ahead, this isn't going to be here very long, it's going out in a week or so. He let me go on and walk around. The only time I was ever on the PATHFINDER, and now it's all cut up and melted over again.

Mr. Nelson It wasn't but ten or fifteen years ago that they scrapped it. I saw it in the paper that it was gonna be scrapped.

Q. I got a letter from someone that one of the AVP's was in Italy being used as a freighter. This is about a year ago now. It had been renamed the San Rafael, or something.

Mr. St. Clair We did a repair job on one at Todd's when we had the fire on it. I came down off the walkway and the fire was going up on both side of this walkway. My leadman said he couldn't find me. I was over in the shop all along - they told us to go to the welders' shack at Todd.

(a few brief reminiscences of Todd Shipyards)

Mr. St. Clair We had quite a prostitution case at Lake Washington. I don't suppose you'd want that...

Q. I certainly do! You're kidding!

Mr. St. Clair Well, in '42, there were no women in the yard except for two women that worked up in the lunchroom. Of course, the swing shift had to get ready for the graveyard shift that came in and there was this mother and daughter.

Somehow or another, we came to work on swing shift and the women's toilet was overflowing out the front door. Water was coming out from the women's toilet on the south end. The South Shop was one one side and this lunchroom and doghouse was upstairs and downstairs was the stores.

Anyway the water was coming out and they had to go in and fix the water somehow. So they had a plumber or the maintenance people went in there and they had to shut the water off, and then they put a snake down and they couldn't find anything. They kept getting longer snakes, and finally they got a big long one that would go about seventy five feet, I guess, and they couldn't make this snake go any further. So then they knew about where it was, so they had to dig down about five feet to get to the pipe. I know we all went over and took a look at it, and it was down there quite a ways. And they said they had to take out a section of this soil pipe, and it was full of condoms, rubber condoms.

Mr. Nelson Plugged it.

Mr. St. Clair Yeah, really plugged it up. Afterwards, they got this fixed and they somehow got some holes, or some peekholes, and these two women were taking the boys.

Q. A mother and daughter?

Mr. Nelson Sounds like a thriving business.

Mr. St. Clair So they made money on the side, I guess.

Q. Yes, I guess so! And I'm worried about working conditions!!

Mr. St. Clair And the welder leadman on graveyard was one of the big perpetrators, along with four or five others. Of course, they fired the whole gang of them.

Mr. Miller and Mr. Nelson I don't remember that.

Mr. St. Clair That was in On the Ways.

Q. It was in the paper?!! I've got to go read that again.

Mr. St. Clair We all commented on that for some time.

Mr. Miller I don't know if anybody was ever killed at Lake Washington Shipyard.

Mr. St. Clair I don't think so.

Mr. Miller I had one guy - Well, of course, we used to stand at the top of the ramp when the ships were on the ways, they had quite a long ramp we had to climb up onto the main deck. We had orders to keep all the men on the ship until the final whistle blew. At the five minute warning whistle, you could put your tools away. But anybody that had tools that had to check into the toolroom, they could go off the

ship, but everybody else had to stay on the ship until the final whistle blew. We leadmen would stand right there and wait for it.

Well, one night the final whistle blew. This guy, instead of going down the ramp, he tried to climb down the other side, and he lost his balance and fell right in between some welding machines. Boy, he was in bad shape. But that's the worst accident I saw at Lake Washington.

Endnotes

1. The interviewer is in error. There were only four anti-submarine net tenders built at Lake Washington Shipyard, the ALOE, the ASH, the BOXWOOD, and the BUTTERNUT. They were part of a 1940 Navy contract.
2. The KALAKALA was launched in 1935 from Lake Washington Shipyard.
3. The AVP's and AGP's launched at LWS were the ABSECON, BARATARIA, CHINCOTEAGUE, COOS BAY, HALF MOON, MOBJACK, ONSLOW, ORCA, OYSTER BAY, REHOBOTH, SAN CARLOS, SHELIKOF, SUISUN, TIMBALIER, VALCOUR, WACHAPREAGUE, WILLOUGHBY, BERING STRAIT, CASTLE ROCK, COOK INLET, CORSON, DUXBURY BAY, GARDINERS BAY, FLOYDS BAY, and GREENWICH BAY, all named for bays and inlets in North America. Although there were 25 of these tenders, not all were finished at Lake Washington Shipyard.
4. The interview is in error. Those were the going hourly rates in 1943, not 1942.
5. The Metal Trades Council was a division of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), of which the Boilermakers was only one member.
6. A Whirly is a large crane.