

SD: So, we were talking about your work in the shipyards, and, what I was going to ask you about now, you were describing a bit what it was like to work there. When you first came in, how did you become a union member?

NB: They hijack you into being a union member...I shouldn't have known, you shouldn't have told me I was on that, cause I'll watch what I say. Everybody that ^{went} in joined the union back then, or, you quit. I think you're there a month. I'm not sure about that. How long you needed time to think things over, I think. And then we automatically went into the...went down to the meeting, and joined, paid your ten dollars I think it was.

SD: Did a steward come up to you, or how were you approached?

NB: No, no, it was understood, that you had to be in the union. I couldn't tell you that part. No, I didn't think it was material. I couldn't remember, I mean, I really can't remember. We just knew that there would be a meeting, and you had to go down, and you joined the union. Of course, you sort of knew that, in general conversation. You realized everybody that worked in those days had to join a union. More or less. You know, it was understood.

SD: What were people's feelings about unions, in the shipyards?

NB: Well, you must remember, you were in a war, and you didn't think about these things. You didn't think whether it was right or wrong. I think that comes later, much later. Maybe in the fifties...early...well, when the war was over. I imagine that's when that came in then--was it right or wrong? Mind you, I think its right. I mean, people have all forgotten what it was like before unions. Not so much in Scotland, because it seems like there have been unions there forever. But, in Canada. Especially loggers--they were terribly hard done by. Miserable. I wasn't in the camps at that time.

SD: How did you become active yourself in the union? Because you did...

NB: Oh, I get you. You mean, why was I a shop steward?

SD: Yeah.

NB: You get round to the nitty gritty. (Laughs) I was approached by the girls. You know, because that's something else you understood--there ^{was} shop stewards in all the departments. So, of course, the women had to have their shop steward.

There was no ifs, I's or buts--that was understood. And I said, "Yeah, that was o.k." So they vote you in a bit. You know, they want you in, so that was that. As a matter of fact, I always did say, if you talk ^{too much}, you know, about things, they made you a boss, or made you a shop steward. ^(LAUGHS) That wasn't original, I mean, that was there before. I'm not taking any credit for it. But that was, that was understood. Which was right because...and there's always the dissenters, you know, that want to create trouble, among the ^{women} as well as the men.

SD: Now, why would they approach you?

WWI NB: Guess I was gabby maybe.

SD: And, had you come from a family that supported trade unionism?

NB: I came from a family with no father. Five children. ^{you see.} Although I had worked...

Early Period I didn't join the union then. There was no union in the First World War. Cause I was in the shipyard then, and there was no union. Mind you, I had no business being in there, but I was in.

SD: That was when you were a teenager?

E.P. NB: Very young teenager. Just practically out of school. Fifteen, I think.

SD: Were there a lot of women working in this area?

E.P. NB: Oh yeah. Different to what it was in the Second World War.

SD: Can you compare the two? Like, what the differences were?

NB: Does that run whether you're talking or not?

SD: Yeah, it doesn't matter. I've got lots of tapes so don't worry about it.

NB: Well, of course that's one of the questions that I never thought about. You see, you don't think about these things. I didn't think it was much different. The work was different, I mean, there wasn't that same work--there wasn't as many people either. In the shipyards it was a different kind of boats. They were re...like the Prince George--those boats were in for renovating--what do you call it?

SD: Renovations.

NB: Yeah. Converting. Converting...that's one thing I am funny about. I like good grammar. I don't always use it but I like to hear it. Even Jack Webster ^{is} slipping too, now, I notice. In his grammar, he was a stickler. You see how I digress?

SD: O.K. So, the conversion was in World War Two--that they were doing that?

NB: Yeah. They didn't do...I was in the...they weren't built--you see, in the First World War, ships were natural. They were not too natural here, in

E.P. Canada. But, that was the shipyard district where I was. All the ships...the famous shipyards, like Fairfield, Harlan and Wolfe, Stevenson, and all those. On the Clyde, (??) in Scotland, Govern (??). And, it was just a matter of getting ships built. I was on, what they called...I was on a winch, an electric winch, that put up the plates on the side of the ship. And then there was sweepers that kept the place generally clean, women--used to be men. We were taking the place of men that had to go to war. Not so much in this last war--I think in the first World War.

SD: When you were on the winch, would you push a button and it would lift it?

NB: No, I followed signals. I had to see a man a little ways away--Old Paddy,

E.P. his name was. You see, I can remember that--and he would, as the... whatever position the plate was in, he saw that. I didn't. I watched him

and I just took his signals. And turned it on or off, slowed down, or something.

SD: That's a very responsible job, actually.

NB: Couldn't be very responsible for a ^{year old} thirteen to do. It's easy-- all you had to do was see. The man that had the responsibility was the man taking the signals from further down, you see. Like maybe, they were putting plates up in the bow, and that's quite a ways--we were about in the middle.

SD: How would you end up working with him? You'd come into the shipyards and then, and would they train you, and say, "Now you're working with Paddy," or...

NB: Yeah. You come in, you don't know anything. So they say, "Paddy, this is Nancy. She's going to take over the winch." Which was very easy, you know. It was a simple thing, you know, and you sat. You just pushed the handle. You know, it sounds very interesting, but it wasn't really. It was boring. And you turned it off, turned it on, or put it halfway, or slowed down. I knew the signals. And then you're not left alone during that time, and then you're on your own. I never made any mistakes. ^{I daren't.} Paddy would have slaughtered me. (Laughs)

SD: How was he with you?

NB: Oh, very nice. He was an Irishman. Very nice, and I didn't want to drink the tea that they made at six oclock in the morning under the ship, you know, and there was a fire under there. And he was always good at seeing I was kept warm, in the wintertime. And...we needed it you see, lots of sugar...horrible stuff, but we drank it. They knew.

SD: How long did you work? What were your hours?

NB: I think we started at six. Till half past five. Saturdays we started at half past five till twelve. In the morning.

SD: Those are long hours.

NB: Certainly they were. Thats what the unions/were for. I mean, thats what the unions were working for. And you know, I can not remember even, either that war or the second world war--what we were paid. Can't remember that.

SD: Was there a union during the First World War when you were working?

NB: Well, there probably...oh yeah, there would have to be, because, I guess my father was in a union. He was a seaman. He went to sea. Deep sea. But it was never talked about in our house. We were too small, you know, to understand if it was spoken about.

SD: And then, he had died, right?

NB: He was killed. He had an accident on the ship, Christmas eve. Died Christmas morning. I was eleven. I was eleven that Christmas, that year. April the next year I was twelve.

SD: That must have been really financially hard on your family.

NB: Oh yes. Mind you, we were...my mother never made us feel that there was a lack.

C.P. Mind you, I suppose there was compensation, because it was a ships accident. And then, the owners of the line, which was the city line, at that time, the city of London it was on, they were very good to my mother. So I don't think we lacked for anything, you know.

SD: So, is that part of why you went to work though?

NB: Oh, we had to go to work. I mean, even compensation wouldn't be that much.

E.P. With five to feed, and a war on. Cause you see, the war started the next year.

SD: And were you--which child were you--were you the oldest or the youngest?

C.P. NB: No, I had an older sister. She had to leave school at thirteen. And you had to have ⁷permission to leave school--you just didn't quit. And my mother had to go to work. She went in to war work.

SD: What happened at the end of the war, then, were you still working?

C.P. NB: No, I wasn't at the...I don't^t think I was...I can't remember if I was in the shipyards when the war was declared or not. I mean, armistice. No, I wasn't. I think I was in the engineering place. I was in three places--didn't stay long in the first one, the munitions. My uncle made me quit. Cause I was falling asleep on the midnight shift, you know, that long shift, the graveyard shift. I was working a machine then too. A rough-turning machine, a lathe ^{they called it.} But working conditions were good for us. They supplied overalls. We got, you know, pants and a jacket. Your hair had to be tied. Cause see, they observed all these safety rules. So thats really about ^{all} I can tell you, you know, that has to do with the unions.

SD: Well, thats the first World War, and then, did you work in the depression at all?

dep. NB: Oh, I had to do odd jobs. My husband came out of work in 1930. Logging was absolutely at a standstill. And, I kept the pot boiling, for awhile, until 1934, till we went back up to camp for a job. He was a steam engineer.

SD: So you had worked between 1930 and 1934?

dep. NB: I worked between...Oh yes, but 1934, then, I went up to a camp. And we had one daughter by that time. After, it was nice. That was really a good life.

SD: During the depression when you worked, what kind of work did you do?

dep. NB: I waited tables. I scrubbed floors. I did a whole lot of things. Took all kinds of jobs that I'd never done before. I always felt I had to work.

SD: Thats interesting, because wasn't that kind of unusual for women to feel that they had to work? Or was it...?

dep. NB: No, you either had to work or you had to...I don't think you girls, or any of your generation or the previous generation--my oldest daughter, yes--but, it... there was no relief, you know. You just couldn't run to the government for everything. There was a cert^{an} amount, but, there was no money then.

My husband, oh yeah, my husband--I forgot about that--he, like, they saw that the men were employed for their welfare. It wasn't called welfare, it was relief. That's when the relief came in. And they worked, and they got money for that. Was not a lot but it was better than the way we had to live before. But he hated it. As a matter of fact, he helped to build Kitsilano pool. (Laughs) God, how he hated that when we lived in Kitsilano. He was a man that took not working very badly. Can you imagine--I don't suppose I should...I'll tell you because it was a fact. ^{dep.} A man had to take a couple of suitcases and walk down-- in Vancouver, at that time we were in Vancouver--to a place, and you picked up all kinds of food that you would never dream of eating before. Rice, Beans. Well, every Friday night my husband got a headache, because he had to go on Monday. For four years. It was awful.

SD: So he'd be in pain for the whole weekend, working up to this? ^{dep.} You know.

NB: Yeah, besides other things. ^{dep.} ~~Can you imagine?~~ ^{which I don't mention.} He was a quiet man. ^{you know.} Don't think he ever got over it. A lot of them didn't.

SD: Yeah. So what happened--was it hard on the family life for people?

NB: As a matter of fact--before, well, even after he started in Kitsilano Pool--we were down near...we were down on ~~Haro~~ ^{dep.} Street, downtown. And, during this lovely weather, we took--there was a bunch of us, families, and we walked down, cause we hadn't money for streetcars, and we walked to Stanley Park, Second Beach, and right beside the pool, in the grass--you know, there was willow trees. And you took your lunch and your supper. You cooked it down there. So we really had, healthwise, it was marvelous. And my husband that hated the sun and the beach, would come with us, and he was a good cook. (Laughs) But anyways...

SD: You put him to work?

NB: Sure. Yeah, he had to do something. And, it was really wonderful. For that, you know, in that sense. So, when you're young you can do an awful lot of things, ^{dep.} and I love to swim. And we'd go in and we'd swim, and come back out, the families, and we'd make, like, sort of a picnic, and you forgot that things were so bad. And you were tired out when you went home.

SD: What about other families where the men were unemployed-- was there a lot of family breakup?

NB: Yes, I believe there was. There was. There was a couple of people I knew. But ^{dep.} I think...I could always get work. ^{you know.} And I wasn't afraid of work. Then that keeps you from...

SD: Was it expected that women would--I know I kind of asked this before, but would ^{dep.} it be hard on the men if their wives could work and they couldn't, or was that something that people just...

NB: Its the same now as...the same now as it was then. The men just are absolutely

devastated at not being able to work. It breaks down their morale. Don't you
dep. think? It's what we're suffering from now. And I think we're going to get another
depression.

SD: We might already be in one. They just call it something else.

dep. NB: Well, we never called it a depression. What did we call it? The hungry thirties.

dep. SD: Actually, when that was happening, during what we now call the depression, did
people see it as a depression, or did you just live through it, or how was it
talked about?

dep. NB: I don't think people spoke about it very much. They...You had a warning, you
know, in 1929. There was the Stock...all the people committing suicide, loss
of money. That was the beginning. As a matter of fact, people lived outside
their income just the same as they do now. There isn't anybody who lives in
their income right now. But there is the day of reckoning. It'll come. They
don't realize it. And they will feel it an awful lot worse, those children,
because they're such a different lifestyle. We didn't have our own homes. You
were lucky if you had a room.

SD: People's expectations are very high right now.

NB: Oh yes, they're living in a ~~big~~ ^{fake lifestyle;} There's no poor people. There's no poor people
today. Everybody is rich.

SD: Was your husband or you involved in any of the unemployed movements of the
thirties?

dep. NB: My husband would run a mile from anything like that. He wouldn't even...he
hated...I think I can tell you, he didn't like unions. He would have been
today, he would have been one of the men that...What do they call it?...He
never scabbed or anything like that. But, he would have been, well, like these...
Non-union. He would have been a non-union...

SD: Contractor or something.

NB: Yeah.

SD: So, in terms of yourself, were you involved in any of...No?

NB: No.

SD: So then, when you got a job in the shipyards, and you became a steward, how
did ~~he~~ feel about that?

WxI NB: I didn't feel any different. When you're young you don't. You know, maybe I
would have now. Maybe...you get officious. I didn't get officious. I didn't
get the chance. (Laughs) But what they do is, the girls would come if they had
complaints, which there weren't many, and every week--I think it was once a
week we went in to the foreman's office, and talk over if there was any complaints.
Mostly the men did all that. In my daily work, I was there to see if ...what ^{things}
~~they~~ ^{were} talked about and then I would tell the girls.

SD: So you'd report from them to the executive, would it be? Or was there a steward's body, or how did that work?

NB: No. No, the shop stewards. Some parts of that I can't remember. I don't even remember the bosses name. Wally--Walter Somebody. You went in to his office, just off ^{the} shop. Like, I was in the pipe shop. Each shop had their own stewards. Shop stewards. We were stewards. There was no discrimination with men and women. There was no person in those days. I mean, there's persons today now--it's chairpersons. Who ever who have thought that was coming? Mind you, I'm not a thinker, so there you are. You have it in a nutshell. There would be **and probably** were, women that could see ahead, you know, and were active. Like Mrs. Pankhurst, you know, the suffragette. I was no suffragette. You'll have to ask the questions because I can't...

SD: That's o.k. So, we were talking a little bit about the steward structure, and so the women would come to you with complaints--what would those complaints be?

NB: Haven't a clue now. Don't remember. They would be petty. Working conditions probably.

SD: And you would then represent them, and then would those things change? Would the company...

NB: I can't even remember that. You see, no, I can't...I've tried. Like the wages-- I can't even rem^mber what the wages were. They were good, you know. And when I was in the First...in Scotland, you just brought your money home and gave it to your mom. She gave you back a little. There was no question. (LAUGHS)

SD: Was your husband working during the war? Did he have a job?

NB: Yeah. He was a steam engineer. He was.... mostly logging camps. Besides, you see, we were after all this spruce in^t the Queen Charlottes for^{airplane spruce??} (unintelligible) And, he tried to...we went up to Port Hardy. We went up to Rupert--Was it Rupert or Port Hardy?--to see if we couldn't put an air strip in there, but we couldn't. It was getting washed away. Millions of dollars wasted in that.

SD: So, was he out of town a lot?

NB: Oh yes. Yes, he worked out of town. And, now and then, I went up to camp. You know, there wasn't all camps that had houses, accomodation for the wives. But when there was I went. I've moved more up and down the Queen Charlottes packing my lovely china. I never broke a piece either. In suitcases. (Laughs) I was a china collector. Good. We're talking about Royal Crown Derby and Limoge and Wedgwood.

SD: A transient china collector. That's wonderful. So, how did he feel about you working in the industry. Was that fine with him, or...?

NB: No, he didn't. A lot of the men didn't like it very much. You know. But it was necessary. You ^{were in to} debt. After the depression, which the war just took us ^{out} of that depression. But, we were in debt. I don't know if everybody paid it back but

ww1 I did. And I felt I had to work to help pay it back. Having someone look after my...only one child at that time. Now, because the other one had grown up. She was in the army. You feel you had to help. Least I did. And my mother was always like that. Dear old mother.

[SD: So your mom did the childcare?

NB: Oh yes, yes. Stayed with us.

SD: Did your husband adjust to you working? ^{Or} Was that something you didn't agree on?

NB: Oh, in the First World War he wasn't there and the second world war he wasn't there much either. He was mostly away. And I think thats why I worked.

SD: What were his feelings about you being shopsteward if he wasn't very excited about unions?

ww1 NB: We never spöke about it much. He wasn't interested. When I was up at camp, I'd say, "Why don't you go to the meetings?" And then as the...But, he believed in the union because he worked ^fthrough previous years before union. Like, he was a fourth class engineer, class. That means the lowest there is. When he was seventeen--he was supposed to be eighteen. And he was a very, very good engineer. Then he got the third papers. His father was an engineer. And then my father-in-law used to say, "Get him to get his second. He's a better engineer than I am." But, he wouldn't. So that was that. He wasn't ambitious.

[SD: But he became an I.W.A. member later on?

NB: Oh yes, sure. For years.

SD: What about the women who you worked with? Were most of them your age, or younger than you?

NB: They would be younger than I am. I was a little old. How old was I? Thirty-nine. Well, they'd be under that.

SD: Did you have trouble getting hired because of your age?

ww1 NB: Oh, no trouble at all. I never had any trouble to get a job. No, there wasn't any trouble. The word went out, there were so many women to go in to Wallace Warworkers (?) I had that little button. It was a pretty thing. For years--somewhere in moving I lost it. Just recently. So, I was one of the fortunate ones that got on. Cause there were more women applied than they could fill.

[SD: What were they looking for in who they hired? Like, what qualities?

NB: Young and healthy. Thats all they--because ^{there was} nobody had any experience.

SD: Except that you would have had more than most women because you worked in the First World War.

NB: It was altogether different. Comditions were altogether different. You know, it wouldn't even apply.

SD: When you did first get hired, who did you apply to?

NB: Wallace Warworkers, Burrard Drydock. That's where I was. And that was the Wallace Warworkers. W.W.W. Burrard Drydock.

SD: Do you remember what they asked you in the interview?

NB: They didn't ask...your name, address. I don't think...I think that's all. Phone number. Not like today, where you've got to get a resume of everything. No, they didn't even ask ^{if you were}...They knew they had to have women in the jobs where...some of the jobs, you know, like rivetting, and the girls that drove the cranes, they were...they needed quite a bit of training.

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SD: You were saying, there were some women who needed training?

NB: Oh yeah, the machines like the cranes, and the rivetting. I think they were the hardest. There were the electricians. There must ^{have} been five departments. *ww* I can only think of four but we had five shopstewards so there were each of us for a department, different shop. Platers. You know what the platers are?

SD: No.

NB: Put up the sides of the ship. Plates that go on the ship.

SD: Was that the department you worked in?

NB: No. I'm not sure that there was a plater shop. I really can't--there's one shop I can't remember.

SD: And were these areas where women worked, or was that it--was that pretty well what was in the ship yard, those five areas?

NB: All those shops over the shipyard. I mean, one man to one job, still. (Laughs) But that's gone by the board because...and they've all forgotten that the union and its origin--you've got one job--and they were working towards lesser hours of work. More jobs. ^{Now, it's} Just lesser hours and then we get another job and we moonlight. That's the way it goes today. The unions have forgotten all about that. I would have been a good suffragette, in a way, (Laughs) if I'd been educated.

SD: Tell us more. Why?

NB: You like ...(??) the suffragette movement eh?

SD: Oh yeah.

NB: That was the beginnings of it. Women's Lib. That was the beginning of it.

SD: How did women feel about working in war industries? Did you ever...?

NB: I don't think you had any feelings. You were excited. It was wartime and you were excited, and you were making money. And after the depression,

WJII
that was an experience in itself. (Interruption)

SD: Did you feel relief at all, like, when you started to work again?

WJII
NB: No, I think what I felt was a good feeling of helping to get us out of debt. Being in debt worried both of us. You know? And, that was about the main feeling. There was money coming in, which hadn't come in for a long time.

[SD: I know that experience is happening to people now, who've been unemployed for a long time, and one of the m finally gets a job or they both get a job and its just such a feeling of...

NB: Oh yeah, you know, it's worse today. Its worse today because people have lived in a better lifestyle than we did. Like, the common, working class didn't even think of ^{ever} owning their own home, in those days. In the thirties there wasn't many people owned their own home, in the thirties. I wasn't one of the fortunates that had a home.

SD: Did that become a goal during the war, to buy a house?

NB: I always wanted a house, and my husband didn't. We would lose it. I couldn't even get him to take out insurance.

SD: So, you never bought a house?

NB: No, till my mother-in-law died, and I inherited hers. So you see, the Lord works in mysterious ways. Its true.

SD: What was the job you did in the shipyards, the second time around?

WJII
NB: I was in the pipe shop. There was various departments in the pipe shop. Naturally. So I was testing copper pipes. That was ry (worth?). I was helping, period. I was helping to test copper pipes. I was his help, Bill's help. There was several people--Bill Scott his name was.

SD: What was he like?

WJII
NB: Oh, a bit of a lady's man. A very kindly man, you know, but--well, I'll just put it bluntly--he was a good b.s.er. (Laughs) Put it in vulgar (??)--He was a good b.s.er. And he was well liked, so you know he wasn't a bad man. He was well liked. Everybody liked him. Old Bill.

[SD: How old was he?

NB: Oh I suppose...I couldn't tell you. Fifties, I guess. Maybe he wasn't that old. I wasn't very good at ages in those days.

SD: How did you end up working with him--were you assigned to him or did he pick you, or what happened?

WJII
NB: No, you're assigned. Some of the men, you see, were dead against the women being in work, in the shipyards, you know. And I think maybe Bill was one of them.

wwII
Because I was in...I started in the --I wonder what that department was?--the Fire Department. Safety. I can't think of the girls name--she was older than I am. And I helped her. And we tested all the fire equipment and all that sort of stuff. And, safety regulations. And then I was approached, you know, the boss came and ...No, it wasn't, it was...we had a woman supervisor. You see, its just coming back, a Miss McGraw. She was well known here. And I don't know who her...I forget who her helper was. I think it was a white...I can't remember, but she had an assistant. And Miss McGraw, she was a real ~~Sargeant-Major~~. Very good for the job, and was well liked. Grace McGraw, I think her name...She'd say, "Well Nancy. You're going to the pipe shop." So that was that. I'd go to the pipe shop. Copper pipe. And that was rather interesting. Very small pipes took a ^{very} high pressure, and great big pipes took a low pressure. I remember ed that much. And then, there was plates--that wasn't quite what they were called. I forget what they were called. Flanges, I think. My job was to tighten them. Mostly Bill had to ^ome after me and tighten them a little bit. But I did the best I could. And then you put the pipe, after it was done, you put the pipe on the machine, and put up the pressure, so it got to sixty pressure. That was the big pipe. I forget what it was-- six hundred and something in the small pipes, steam pipes. I imagine the big pipes...

SD: So that was testing?

wwII
NB: Testing the copper pipes. And the copper pipe itself. -it was wonderful seeing the copper, the different colors in the copper. I can't think of the name of the thing you had to go and get fixed every so often.

SD: How did they use the copper pipes in the boats? Was that for plumbing?

NB: Machines. All I know about ^{them} is they just come in to the shop. I did my job and out they went. Besides running for dusters to clean the place. (Laughs)

SD: So did you ever have that sense of the ship as a whole, that you were working on it, or was it more like you did your little piece of work and that was that?

NB: Oh no. I was always interested in ships. You know, my father being at sea, and all my father's people were seafaring people, and my mother's were military. So I was always interested in ships. And my grandfather made those sailing ships and put them in cabinets, you know. When he was at sea that was a hobby. And he made dancing dolls. Nearly all sailors have a hobby, at sea. That was about a three month voyage. Put in, all over the world. So, the geography of the world was always inter^esting to me. I was always going to travel.

SD: O.K.

NB: Now we get back to...what else can I think about? Thats all I can think about.

SD: Well, I was just wondering, this fellow who you worked with, you said that he

[had at first not really seemed to want to work with women. How did he express that?

NB: He didn't. He didn't. This is what we gleaned, you know. We had a canteen for the women. And, you know how you talk. He was always nice. He was a nice gentleman kind of man. I always remember--he had a funny, old mustache. I hated mustaches. (Laughs) And then they would kid you, you know. If I wasn't always right, you know. I would argue with him too. ^{They were very good.} I think the men on the whole took us very gracefully.

SD: That was my next question--how did the men deal with the women coming in, pretty well, as a group?

NB: I think, yes, I think they were pretty good.

SD: Were there a lot of practical jokes in the shipyards?

NB: Well, not so much this time, but the last time. We wore skirts for awhile. We didn't get our uniform right away, now that I think about it.

SD: In the first World War you wore skirts?

NB: We wore skirts, yes. And, a joke was--what the heck was that man doing anyway? And I always had not too good eyes, you know. Couldn't see too well. If I'd see him, I could always ^{have} avoided him. But they'd put that air pipe on you, and your skirts would blow up. So finally I said to one of the girls, "I hate going down there." And she said, "Why?". So I told her, so she laughed. She says, "Oh, we all go through that." She says, "I'll show you another way that you don't need to pass him." There was just one man in particular. Little to do, you see, they didn't work too hard.

SD: That's something I've heard about the shipyards, was that people would sometimes hide or...

NB: Oh yes. You want to know about that? Oh, I shouldn't tell you...Yes. Well, there wasn't always that...You got caught up in your work--not the First World War, because you were really busy then. Boy, they couldn't get enough...(?) But in this...isn't it funny you should think about that...Yeah, they used to go places and...(?) ^{the men} would say, "Come on, show you where you can go," and you'd go up. Even one time we went in the hospital, where they had the hospital. There was four of us, and they said, "Stay there till we come back." You know...so we did. But the bigshots came along and stood right down beside the ladder of the hospital. So we said, "What we gonna do? We'll ^{not say} (??)." (So we missed our lunch. (Laughs) We couldn't get down. And that was common. There wasn't the work. We were waiting for work, you see. I'm not sure you should put that--oh well.

SD: That's o.k. Someone else told me first.

NB: They did eh? Oh yes, somebody must have told...Yes. That was in my instance, you see. But there was others. All had different places, you see. You know, they'd

say, "Well, we haven't much for you to do." I guess, the idea was you'd get laid off.

SD: So people were kind of protecting their jobs? Was that part of it?

NB: I don't think there was anything malicious in it. We were just...I don't know what they thought. But they didn't want you hanging around doing nothing. You had to be busy. Most of the time you were, but there were times when you weren't. (Interruption)

SD: So, how did people hide--like, did supervisors know that workers were hiding?

NB: Oh dear, no...We probably just keep out of the way. We didn't call it hiding. Just keep out of the way. And, maybe an hour. Oh, I know, that time we were in the hospital, they were converting a ship, and we were on it. At that time I wasn't with the copper shop. I was with the safety thing. And we...They said "Stay up here," you know. I guess it was out of the way of the brass. Which we did and then we lost our lunch. We didn't get any lunch that day.

SD: And then the brass was right there.

NB: Yes. (Laughs) But it was very interesting. You know, it was an interesting time.

SD: What kind of mixture of people worked in the shipyards--were (Unintelligible)

NB: They were mostly North Vancouver people, but all over. I think...oh, they had to be. Cause the ferries were just black, you know, with the men going over. They came over on the ferries.

SD: Did the women come over on the same ferries?

NB: Yeah. Oh yes, it was serious business, you know.

SD: Were the ferries crowded--were there any problems?

NB: Oh no. There was no problems. Everybody wanted to get home, or everybody needed to get to work. They were conscientious that way. Once they got there I don't know what they did, whether they worked or just shirked. I don't know. I know I worked. Except when I was hiding.

SD: Did you have contact with other women who worked in the shipyards--were you friends?

NB: Not after. No, mostly everyone went to their home. The ones that lived, I think, in North Van maybe. I thought maybe, after that calendar. They might all be dead. You know, there's a lot of them probably weren't as old as I was.

SD: No, I bet some of them are still around.

NB: Well, maybe disappeared, you know, gone elsewhere. I've tried to find if there's anybody on the home but there isn't.

SD: Did people...did you used to spend time together on your coffee breaks and lunch hours? Did women spend time together, or did women and men spend time together?

NB: Well, it was in a canteen, and if it was the summer, you sat someplace where you were in the sun. I was in the shop all day, so the ones that worked inside generally wanted to get into the sunshine...I couldn't tell you what we talked about.

SD: What about women with children, was that an issue that came up -- concern over kids, or, you know, leaving your children with babysitters, or, were there other women with children there?

NB: Oh, they all had children. The majority had children. Never spoke about it, my dear.

SD: Were most women married who worked in the shipyards?

NB: Not necessarily.

SD: What about when the layoffs were going to happen, were you still in there at that time?

NB: No, I left, because I went up to the Queen Charlottes. My husband was going up there after this spruce.

SD: Did you work up in the Queen Charlottes?

NB: No, no. So I left before...no, my sister was there until the end of the war. A lot of them, you know, stayed till the end. And you got quite a good--the unemployment insurance--there was good, there was a good sick...No, it wasn't that. I'm a way ahead of myself. Kathy, could you get me another drink? ...(interruption)...Oh, I did tell you about that. Me taking over the fruit stand in Abbotsford?

SD: No, you never told me about that. ^{NB} (Unintelligible) "Mrs. Buker, did you ever work in a place like this," and I said no. I used to walk up the hill, where I lived, and they had this fruit stand, you know, vegetables and fruit. He and his wife run it. They had three children. They all came down with the flu at once.

SD: Oh no.

NB: And his partner comes in, and ^{he} says, "Do you think you could manage it?" I said, "I don't know. I'll try." They couldn't get anybody to take over. But that time it was for a week, and there was a lot of people were--I either gave them too much, or they didn't get enough, but they never knew it and I didn't know it either. (laughs) I couldn't tread the scale too well. People would come by in their cars. It was just about five minutes from where I lived. That was why he wanted me to do it. Wants sacks of potatoes or they were ordering (??)... Sack of potatoe was just a little bit much for me, so I'd phone my husband and I would say, "Can you come up? (??) and do the potatoes," and he'd come up. (LAUGHS)

SD; Cause he'd have to carry them?

NB: No, they just rolled them out from where they kept them.

SD: Oh, that's funny.

NB: And I took over a hotel, a little hotel in Victoria. She couldn't get anybody to relieve the night shift, you know. She wanted to go on her holidays. It was she needed (??) somebody on 24 hours a day. Thats the machine out there...
(Interruption)

SD: So when was that that you did that? Was that recently?

NB: Oh no, that was in 19...I left Victoria in '61. My mother-in-law asked us if we'd come. Me, because my husband was away. If I'd come and stay with her until she passed on because her other son and his wife/walked out on her. And of course my dear old mother-in-law and I were always at loggerheads. So I sent the letter up to my husband, and I says, "What do you want me to do?" He said, "Please yourself. You better write and tell her you haven't changed one bit." So, I did. She says, "Oh please come, Nancy." And we...it was wonderful. She got really sick the last few weeks of her life, and I looked after her, cleaned her and seen that she...and she'd say, "Who ever would have thought it would be you Nancy?" And I'd tell my husband, "I never would have thought it."

SD: So you two got along eh?

NB: Oh yeah.

SD: Thats interesting...

NB: And she was ninety-two.

SD: Oh my goodness.

NB: Straight as a die (??) till just about three weeks before she died. And then she was in bed, because we were waiting for the bed in the hospital. She didn't last too long.

SD: Ninety-two. Thats getting up there.

NB: Yeah. Still was interested enough in herself to get a perm.

SD: Really?

NB: Yeah. But lovely hair. Black. Just a little grey in the front.

SD: At that age?

NB: Vivid blue eyes.

SD: That's great. Thats funny that she said that to you.

NB: Oh yeah. I tell you, it was...you haven't got the machine on?

(interruption)

SD: You went up to Rupert after the war?

NB: No, I didn't. Queen Charlottes.

SD: How long did you live up there?

NB: Well, it was spasmodic, you know. Camp would close downⁿ, or I'd come down and leave my husband up there. Cause, I needed to get down. And then the

camps shut permanently, I think in 1950.

SD: What was it like living in the camps? Were there other women there?

NB: Oh yes. Yes.

SD: Would you have a house up there?

NB: Yeah, they gave you...we had two bedroom places. Nothing elaborate, you know. Wooden. Brand new, but they would be wooden shacks. Wooden shacks, we called them. Let's face it.

SD: Was there heat and light and all that?

NB: Oh yes.

SD: And was there a strong sense of community amongst the women?

NB: Yes. They were little communities. Some camps are larger than others. Ours was--how many women?--maybe ten women. But there would be lots more men, you know...

SD: Nancy, what union were you in, was it the Boilermakers--in the shipyards?

NB: It was the Steamfitters and Plumbers Union. Isn't it funny--I just cleaned up last year. In here, you know. I looked at my receipt from my union and I thought, "Oh. Nobody's interested. I'll tear it up." So I tore it up.

SD: (Weeping noises)

NB: And accidentally...

SD: I'm going to burst in to tears.

NB: Why?

SD: Because you and so many other women have done that.

NB: Yeah. And after keeping it for years.

SD: I know. Its typical.

NB: As you know how that calendar came out? Oh, you didn't see the calendar?

SD: Yeah, I worked on it...

SD: So, when you look back on that period of your life, did it have a big impact on your life to come, working in the shipyards?

NB: Oh no. You took it in your stride. Thats the best way I can describe it. Just took these things in your stride.

SD: But it was rough?

NB: Whats the word they use today? Men , you know...

SD: Chauvinism?

NB: Chauvinism. They could not see how women could help. I've read books, you know, about women and war work. And it was amazing because there was lots of jobs, you know, that needed education, and they got into that. Specially in the...like Boeings, or someplace like that.

SD: So what would the...do you know what the men did? Would they be rude to women or would they ignore them?

NB: No, as far as I'm concerned, they just took it from there.

SD: So, they had it in their heads that it would be bad but in actuality it wasn't.

NB: It wasn't.

SD: Was there ^{newspaper} coverage of women entering the war industry?

NB: Oh yeah....In fact, we don't know how many papers...(?) Sending it away, you know...It was a nice write-up.

SD: So there was a lot of public/interest in women going in?

NB: Yes.

SD: Did that help you feel comfortable working in the/industry?

NB: No. No, I'm not going to say that. You don't think about it in those terms. You're getting at it from a very young...how old are you?
