

I guess it would be about '41, maybe '42, Help was getting scarce from taking them into the army and killing them over there; and then they brought the women in and it was really quite a thing. It was kind of novel, something the guys hadn't seen before. They came in as helpers and I think there was one or two came in as improvers, as they called them in the yard. They'd gone through a training course in either burning or welding and they had to go through several months of improvership before they were adjudged tradesmen. The training was in the yard. You were on the job now; you begin to learn. This was the same with the men: they came into the yard, you start at the bottom, then you start working up. I imagine there was a lot that came in that couldn't take it and left, particularly when they came in on a ship that was just about finished and found themselves working up on the upper deck, on the superstructure, and all this vast open space below them.

The helper generally strung the hoses out, for the tradesman, the burners' hoses or the cable for the welding machine and ~~after they were~~ after they were an improver and doing the job, somebody would come along and string the hoses out for them. The men stepped up to pull their hoses out for them and give them a lot of help that you wouldn't have given to a male worker by any means. But this soon disappeared. First thing you knew, they were stringing their own hoses and cables out, quite effectively doing their own work without any help. Pretty soon, nobody was paying them any attention; they were just another working man, another ~~worker~~ worker.

There was one bar in Rupert, the Savoy Hotel--now beer was rationed of course, during the War, and they saved the beer for the steel gang coming out of the shipyard.

It was the steel gang where most of the women worked, outside of the office. So the bat was closed, till the steel gang came off, then they opened it. And these women would come in; they'd sit down, as usual the man would buy the beer, But I don't think it was a week before they asserted themselves, "Now, its my round now." And they were buying round for round with the rest of the workers. This is how close they became and how well they were accepted.

It seems they (the women) did appear a little nervous to begin with. "Well, Jesus, how are the guys going to accept this!" And working on a ship wasn't the easiest thing; they were workin' at a bit of a height, particularly in the skeleton, when they're just putting up the framework. There were ladders and there were stagings; they were very careful about how they got to where they had to work, of course so were some of themen. Whereas others didn't pay any attention at all; they walked across the beams, just paid no no attention. In fact there was some people that never do get accustomed to it. (????) One woman stepped off the deck onto a staging and the staging planks have some give to them, this spring. Now, it was her first day in the yard; and I guess this spring scared her and the height, and she went right over the edge. She was a cripple the rest of her life. (?????????)

Their husbands worked in the yards or their fathers and there were the daughters, They were all from around here; I don't think any of them were brought in, It was pretty hard to tell (if there were changes in attitudes towards women). See, Rupert was in such a turmoil, it was an army base for the Canadian army; there was an army base for the American Army. There was also a concentration of workers and a concentration of fishermen. So there

was some terrific conflicts. Saturday night was a series of battles from one corner to the next.

Lay offs:

I think there was that understanding amongst the women that this was a war-time job. And as soon as the war was over it would be finished. In fact most of the men in the yard at Prince Rupert knew that when the war was over we had no jobs either. The Rupert yard had been closed from between the two wars; they did do a bit of work: they built a couple of barges, other jobs like that, periodically, but for all intents and purposes the yard was closed. It must have been the latter part of '45 (they began to lay off women). I got laid off in '46, February, which is pretty early and I had a fair amount of seniority, So it must have started right after the end of the war. They probably laid them off in terms of seniority.

Union:

They acted as shop stewards in the union. Not only where only women were employed but where the general workess, the burners and welders was the main job they had. (Women became shop stewards) like anybody else. Elected by the group they wer working with. You see, the shop stewards were never appointed, they were elected. If you were a rivetter and you work in a certain section, well that group elected the shop steward who was a rivetter, same with the caulkers, same with the welders. That was the peruliar thing about the Rupert yard, we had a closed shop, but it wasn't leagal. It was a closed shop because the union made it closed. Every union member carreied membership cards, not only the shop steward, but the shop steward was responsible for collecting

dues, There was no check-off of anything. You had a very close relationship with the workers. There was almost a constant "wobble" in the yards, like a wildcat strike, And yes, the women participated .

Women got equal pay. I think it was recognized, that if they didn't get their right wages, the same wages as the man was getting, then they was going to undercut the man's ~~wages~~ wages. This, I'm sure, was generally recognized.

The company did make an ~~attempt~~ attempt, ~~kind of~~ kind of a half-hearted attempt, mind you. They just weren't paying the wage. And that was one of the

causes of one of the wobbles. ^(Laughs.) Downed ~~their~~ their tools, "Now go over and get this thing straightened out." So it was straightened out; that was the last time, there was never any more trouble around it. They (the women) were kinda sittin' by, watchin' to see what was happening. Weren't too many women in the yard at that time. Was nipped right in the bud, as soon as they raised the question, it stopped.