

Pearl Margolis Hill
Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection
Interview conducted on February 20, 2007 at Hill's home in
Florida
Verbatim transcript

INTERVIEWER: So to start, can you tell me your full name, and also the spelling of it?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: My name is Pearl Margolis, M-A-R-G-O-L-I-S, Hill.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And what is your date of birth?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: By date of birth is 6/5/23.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And what is your current address?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: This is Elsmere E, 213.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And you've lived at this -- how long have you lived here?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Thirty-two years.

INTERVIEWER: Right in this spot.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In Century Village in this apartment.

INTERVIEWER: Wow. OK. And tell me when you worked at the Navy yard.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I worked in the Navy yard in 1941 or 2. Now, I don't remember exactly. When did I, um -- Levine say she worked there. I worked --

INTERVIEWER: She said she worked there from September '42, for 30 months.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's when I worked there. I worked there a little longer than she did.

INTERVIEWER: Were you there before she got there?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. I think about the same time we waited online.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And which part of the Navy yard did you work in?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Uh, Building 4.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And can you describe the kind of work that you did?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I did -- well, describe it. It was -- do you know those boxes of letters, A-B-C, and the numbers?

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I used to bang those into the steel plates.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And what was -- what were you -- what is a steel plate?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The steel plates go on the ship.

INTERVIEWER: So were you working in -- what -- do you remember --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Building 4.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what department it was?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Building 4. What department? You know, I have so many papers on that, and I -- it was such

short notice that my grandson came in, and you called, and I just couldn't look through all the -- like, we used to get a leaflet every week.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: A paper. *The Shipyard Worker*, it was called.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And *The Shipyard Worker* told you everything. I'm gonna look them up, and maybe I can send them to you.

INTERVIEWER: Sure, that would be great. Yeah.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That would be great, because I know it had the ... the captains and the ... the high ... I forget what they call 'em. We used to call 'em names. You know, they come around to watch and stare behind certain things and watch everyone work as they did their job and all that.

INTERVIEWER: Was that -- were those supervisors?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. You could call them supervisors, yes. The supervisors would watch 'em. And then I used to put these, uh, put these numbers on the steel, and I got hit by a gun turret [*sic*, for turret throughout]. A gun turret upside down. The legs are pointy.

INTERVIEWER: How did that happen?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: How -- when did that happen?

INTERVIEWER: How did that happen?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, how -- we don't know. Oh, the gun turrents were, uh, lifted up with the -- oh, the eleva-- not the elevators. The people that used to move the, uh, steel. They were up on top of the building, near the roof, like an elevators.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And so the gurrin -- the gun turrent was moved onto a higher steel, and it moved a little, and I was putting the in -- so the -- the feet -- it was upside down. The feet had legs on them, and points, like uct -- rectangular points. And one of them hit my forehead. So I -- they put me in the, uh, mold loft for a few weeks, and that was there, so I came out of the hospital. You know, it was, uh ... They, uh, stitched it up. And they didn't put me back in the steel loft, in the steel building. But they put me in the mold loft with a supervisor, [05:00] Mr. Eichelroth. And he was very good.

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Eichel--

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Eichelroth. E-I-C-H-E-L-R-O-T-H.

Something to that effect.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Where did you say you lived?

INTERVIEWER: I live in Brooklyn. Uh, right in -- I live in Fort Green, near the Navy yard.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In Fort Green.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Isn't that something? If you took Metropolitan Avenue car up -- do you know the section?

INTERVIEWER: Of the Navy yard, you mean?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I do.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Now, there used to be Metropolitan Avenue car -- trolley car.

INTERVIEWER: And that was what you took to get to work?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That -- Yes. That went to Middle Village. Put down Middle Village, because that's where I lived.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember your address?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, 7322 69th Avenue.

INTERVIEWER: 7322 69th.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Middle Village. [laughs] There was -- We -- I must show you papers with -- we have a reunion every year. Almost 300 people come from there. Not the old timers like me, but new ones. Like the [rumor?] kids -- or what do you call the kids that are born -- the bo -- after the War?

INTERVIEWER: Baby Boomers.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The Baby Boomers are in there now.

INTERVIEWER: Now this is a reunion of what?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Of Middle Village. Reunion of Middle -

- oh, I must show it to you, it's right over here.

[laughs] So you see it right out -- You have to excuse me for getting up and down the way I do. There's no other way.

INTERVIEWER: That's no problem.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No other way I can do that. [opens drawer] I just had it out. [Honor?] dress. You know, when you make a dress, you use -- not a template. For a dress you use a pattern.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That was the, uh, shape of the, uh -- that was the template. A pattern of a ship.

INTERVIEWER: Was it on a piece of paper?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: On a piece of wood.

INTERVIEWER: Ahhhh.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It was all made out of wood.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And how did you -- What did you use to make those?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We had a map -- the supervisor had a map of every piece of template we had to make. The, uh,

like template number, uh, 34 or something, would be the, um, side of the, uh, ship, where this piece of metal goes into.

INTERVIEWER: And so how did you make those?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: With hammer and nails. And we had a -- a board that -- when -- not a board, um -- When you pick up dirt, what do you call that, uh ... You sweep the dirt onto um ...

INTERVIEWER: A broom?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Not a board. On a what?

INTERVIEWER: A -- Do you mean a broom?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Or like a -- a pan?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. It was a -- a metal dust pan.

INTERVIEWER: Uh huh.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Like a duster. A metal dust pan. You know, it's like goes down -- it fits under something. It can slide -- That's the way you would nail on it.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And so you would, uh, be given some pl-- some plans, or some blueprints?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The -- yes. The, uh -- No. Mr. Eichelroth would have the blueprints, and he would trace it down onto a small piece of, uh -- a pattern. And you would

have to do that in wood. The pattern of a ship is made in wood first.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. And you would -- you would do that using woo-- pieces of wood?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Pieces of wood. Like, it was really like three inches, or four inches, by ten inches, say, thin. And we would make the pattern out of those pieces of wood. The whole ship is made into a pattern first. You cannot -- even a dress maker can't make a dress unless she has a pattern --

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: -- to make the dress. And that's the way we made the ship.

INTERVIEWER: And how big would a template be?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Some would be about ten feet, some would be five feet. There would -- it's all different sizes. [10:00] Where that template sticks. If it was the side of the ship, they made ten pieces -- maybe ten pieces long. If it was portions of the -- a turrent or something of the ship, it would be four inches long. Or five feet long. It didn't matter. The sizes aren't the -- [map called for?].

INTERVIEWER: And did you -- wha-- did you stand up to do this work? Did you --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: On your knees. The floor -- the floor of the template was beautifully laid out, where you'd -- what's that word? Not the cu-- what the ... You know, inlaid wood that you would kneel on. And of course you wore dungarees. So it shouldn't bother -- The girls couldn't, uh, (inaudible) [11:00] knees that much.

[laughs] The floor -- everything was done on the floor, or we had tables on horses. Wooden horses.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm. So you would be on the floor. And would you -- where would you get the pieces of wood, or how would you make the pieces of wood, to hammer into the --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The wood would be given to us with the board -- by another department, and the [tentively?] [for tentatively?] the hammer and the, uh -- no, I haven't recently -- a bucket of -- the numbers and letters. And you would take each number out and each letter out and hammer it into the wood. In a corner. So that when it went down to the steel building -- it was in our building, but when it went downstairs, the same number that we had on the template would go on the steel.

INTERVIEWER: Now, was that steel the same department where you had been working before when you got the injury?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I was upstairs. That was downstairs.

INTERVIEWER: And that's -- Is that where you had been before?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So -- Uh -- So the pieces of wood would come, you would take what you needed --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: -- and hammer --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Hammer the nails -- hammer the wood together to form that template. And the nails would be -- we would wear, um, around our waist, um, a workman's, uh, apron, with nails in it. And the hammer. With tools, you know. You put the tools on your hip, or on your waist, and you have everything right there. If you had to make a temp-- If you had to make a pattern, you would take your needle and thread. This was our needle and thread. Our hammer and nails. And we had paper that showed us, it must be the same as that -- the wood has to be the same as the template on the map.

INTERVIEWER: Was it hard work?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It was -- it was tedious work, but you got to enjoy it. It was your exercise and work.

INTERVIEWER: Was is -- was it physically hard to do?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, not for me. For some it was.

INTERVIEWER: Why -- why was it not hard for you?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Because I did -- I shoveled sidewalks for my mother and father, and I -- I enjoyed it. I enjoyed all work. Most work.

INTERVIEWER: Did you -- hem -- was there some training that you received at the -- at the Navy yard to know how to do this work?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: If the -- Yes. Because you became a welder first. You had training in welding.

INTERVIEWER: What was that training like?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The training showed you how to hold the welder, how to fire it, and what to put in it to make it fire, and to weld pieces of metal together. A seam. How to be welders. And I referred -- I -- I remember my mother's house, I had to put caulking around the bathtub. And I did the same thing with welding. I related the two together. And I did very well in [that?]. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: So the caulking [15:00] was before the welding?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, way before. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Um ... And how long was the training? Do you remember? Was it a -- was it weeks, months?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, it wasn't weeks or months. I'd say about a month.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember where that happened? The training?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It happened -- I don't remember. It -- I remember being a shock. [laughs] It was in the Navy yard, on the edge of a building somewhere. Purposely just for that, uh, for learning to weld.

INTERVIEWER: And was that the first thing that you did when you began at the Navy yard, you had the welding training first?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, I think they -- they sent us to classrooms to introduce us to what we were going to do.

INTERVIEWER: So that came first?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, that came first. And -- I always say, if I only had those papers I would know just who -- who was who, and who was I. [laughs] Because I remember that coming first, and then you went to welding class. It was like just like going to school to begin with. All you -- you all got numbers, and what you -- where you -- what room you were supposed to be in. And that's where you went. They would even call out on a loud, uh, microphone or something. "Everyone in Room 2HL," or something to that effect, go there. And we did. It was like a school. We did just what they told us.

INTERVIEWER: Was it all women in the school?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. There were some men. Men and women. Mostly mo-- mostly women.

INTERVIEWER: Now, to back up for a minute, how had you come to work at the Navy yard in the first place?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I think they had it in the newspaper. That's how we all met.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what you saw in the newspaper?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: What I what?

INTERVIEWER: What did you see in the newspaper?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I think they said they -- they're hiring women?. They're doing hiring women. "Oh, it must be all women!" No, there were men there too. It said they're hiring in the days they had, and everything, and we all came down around the same time.

INTERVIEWER: What made you want to do that work?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, I was just married, and my husband went to war. And I felt, "Well, as long as he went to war, I've got to work, do something for the war, to help them." And that's how I went down there. It dragged me. [laughs] It was wonderful, we had -- Oh, there was -- One girl I rem-- Her name was Jackson, a colored girl. And I was steadily with her, and she was very nice. We of course -- we were not used to being with Black people at the time, and after that we got very used to it, we loved them. They were very -- very nice. And I don't know what happened to her. But I just remember her name was Jackson.

INTERVIEWER: Were you -- did you feel hesitant at first,
because you weren't used to working with Black people.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No. I fell right in it
(inaudible) [18:53]. It was my everyday work.

INTERVIEWER: Did -- did the Black women that you worked with
have -- How would it -- how were their lives different or
the same from you life?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, we never discussed -- we -- we
did discuss it. It was the same. They were the same as
our lives.

INTERVIEWER: Were most of the women married that you worked
with?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No. Sidonia was, and we met
another one or two girls, that's all. They may have been
married but we didn't know. We were friendly with just the
-- a certain group that worked with us or near us. Then I
remember, my father used to go fishing, and he took three
or four girls that we worked with fishing in Williamsburg
somewhere. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Was that on the week-- on your day off?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Day off, of course. We all met.

INTERVIEWER: Did you catch anything?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yeah, we -- so you used to catch
[20:00] fish. We never knew what they were. My son became

a fisherman, unlike Bob. You should see his room, what he did to me in my -- in my apartment here. I let him bring all his things in. He's says he'll buy an apartment when he gets married, he was young then. And he brought all -- I was never able to do anything to make other [closets?]. I am now. You see over there, the empty space? I got rid of some of his things because his children took a picture or two home. And I have space for another cabinet. [laughs] And I'll tell you later where I want to build a cabinet. It's all for fish. Not live fish.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It's -- they're taxidermy. So they don't smell or anything. They look pretty. I got used to it. And even that comes into the -- "How could you let your son do that?" How could you let -- He wanted to do it! And I was -- I said, "All right." [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: So, uh -- So you did sometimes socialize with -- with the other girls?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER: When did that happen?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That happened, I think after we were given our, uh, goodbyes from the Brooklyn Navy yard. Let's see, how long did I work there? I worked there about two years.

INTERVIEWER: And why did you stop working there?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Because they sent us notice that your term of work is over.

INTERVIEWER: Were you surprised?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Of course. [laughs] But we got used to it.

INTERVIEWER: But the war was not over yet.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, it wasn't over yet. But the work I think was over. I don't remember. I really don't remember how that happened.

INTERVIEWER: And the other girls received the same notice at the same time?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: The whole -- the whole group of you?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, not the whole group. No. They kept on until about another year. Let me see. When was the war over? In '44?

INTERVIEWER: Forty-five.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In '45. I don't remember how many of -

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INTERVIEWER: But it was before the war ended?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Before it ended. They had to start somewhere, because -- and then it involved a lot of factories and places and work orders. They had to start somewheres to do a way [away?] with making life what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Was it -- were you surprised to find yourself doing that sort of work? Had you imagined doing that kind of work before?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. I couldn't imagine doing that. Well, I can imagine doing anything I have to do.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: If you have to do it, you do it. If you want to -- I *wanted* to do it. And I found that I loved doing it.

INTERVIEWER: When you were in the steel part, were you doing the welding that you had learned to do?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, of course. Of course you did the welding. You -- There was a se-- another section where you welded, and you put the numbers on.

INTERVIEWER: So you were doing -- you were in the welding position when you had the injury?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: When I first came there I worked in the -- putting the numbers on. Then I welded. Then I went to Eichelroth's department, the [temp art/template?]. From

the template -- I don't remember how long I stayed in the template. From the template, I think that's where I got the notice up there. Because that was almost three years working there.

INTERVIEWER: Um, when you had the injury, and you said you went to the hospital, was it the hospital at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I don't remember. I don't remember whether there was a hospital there. I know I made very light of it. I didn't -- I even told my friends, "It doesn't hurt. It doesn't bother me." And it didn't take too long. It was about four weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Before?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Be-- the four weeks -- When it happened, they gave me four weeks, uh, with pay ... uh ... for recuperation. [25:00] I'd say. And then I came back. I missed everyone. [laughs] And we worked the graveyard shift.

INTERVIEWER: So what hours did that mean that you worked?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The graveyard shift was I think 8 o'clock at night [long pause] till about 1 in the morning. Or 2 was it? I know it was called the graveyard shift.

INTERVIEWER: Was it -- was it becoming late when the shift would end?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you worked until sunrise?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: And was that -- did you work that shift the whole time that you were at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No. They change your shift. They didn't let you work those shifts -- none of the shifts were worked too long until they changed you.

INTERVIEWER: Would you -- when you took the 8 p.m. shift, did you get to work the same way?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You took the street car?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And then came out and took the street car back?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Unless -- Well, when I came back, I took what?

INTERVIEWER: Did you take the street car home in the morning?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yeah. Of course. Until we found -- not too long, because then we found other people working there. Like, I knew some fellows from Middle Village that worked in the Navy yard, in a different building, and they used to have a car. So we would all pile into the -- you know, six people would get into that car. Oh, and they would make so much fun though. They -- Like one man always came late. So when they saw him, they started the car

[writhing?]. And he'd yell af-- a few blocks, a good few blocks -- yell after us, "Wait for me, wait for me!" And then they would wait for him. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: That's funny. Um ...

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: There was a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER: And what -- And so you-- It sounds like you also knew some men at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I what?

INTERVIEWER: You knew some men who were working at the Navy yard also?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes. Yeah. See, I know their children, and they go to the same reunion now.

INTERVIEWER: So they were all from Middle Village?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The ones I knew were from Middle Village.

INTERVIEWER: And why were those men not actually fighting? Why were they not shipped overseas?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They were sick. Or something. One had eye trouble. And they had families. They had big families in that time. Because if there's -- Of course. Because their children are coming to the reunion, and I know them. And their children are now 50 -- 40, 50 years old. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, uh -- So there was some socializing among the people that you lived with, and the other girls that you worked with.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. Yeah. There was some socializing that wasn't too -- you know, like we knew some that were married, and they went out with this one and that one. But we never talk about that. We never did. Because this was like -- like some -- you know, when your husband goes to war, you never know whether they're coming back or not. Or -- But Sidonia and I, we -- "Good morning, good morning. How is Murray?" And she would say to me, "How is Jack? And what did he write? And what did he call you?" He used to call me "my tootsie wootsie." [laughs] Hello tootsie wootsie. And he would -- [call a hired babe?], I was ... She would tell me -- In fact, when he came home, I saved all those email letters. There were letters -- small letters. I saved them all in a box. They weren't -- I never went and read them and reread them. Once I read them, that was enough. I had other things to do. But those things got him -- And the ten percent -- No, not just ten percent. A hundred percent in the Army. He was in Patton's Fifth Division or something.

INTERVIEWER: Until -- And how often did you get letters from him?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, I got -- At one time I didn't get any letters -- letters at all for a month or so. And then I would get 10 or 15 letters. And he'd tell me all -- he -- the jeep ran over -- the jeep turned over, and he fell out, in Ireland somewhere. [30:00] And -- No, they shipped him to Ireland for the hospital. And all those letters I presented to the Board. And he got 100% in the Army, when he came out with the jeep turning over. But when he died, it didn't come to me, because his money just depleted. He didn't die of his foot injury, he died of a heart attack. So that was it. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Hmm. And, uh -- So he would write you fun -- fun letters.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: [Always?]. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: And you would talk with Sidonia about it.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Right. Oh, Sidonia and I, [we're all] discuss it, of course. That's why they blocked out a lot of letters. They don't want people discussing it. There's a reason for all these things.

INTERVIEWER: Did they -- Did you supervisors talk to you about speaking about your work at the Navy yard? Did they -- did they want you not to talk about it, or did that not matter?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, it didn't matter. It didn't matter. If we -- Whatever we talked or said, it was during

our lunch hour. Or our period that we got -- we got a period in between, I forgot what they call it. Not a rest period. Um ... What do you -- what do people get --

INTERVIEWER: Like a coffee break?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: And what would you do during those breaks?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Those breaks we would -- that's when we would discuss all this -- we would sit and discuss just what he wrote, what she wrote, what I wrote, what -- and we would say how wonderful our lives were until they went away. We would discuss every -- everyday things.

INTERVIEWER: How long had you been married when Jack went away?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Now?

INTERVIEWER: How long had you been married at that time, when --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, about a year.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And when you would go to -- to chat, and have a coffee break, where did you go? Or did you stay where you were already working? Was there another place to go?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: There was. There was a room. Another room to go to.

INTERVIEWER: And then during lunch ...

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: During lunch we would either go out or stay in the room. Or stay in a -- an hour lunch from when we -- where we had to. You know, I forget all -- Lunch we would go out fancy. There's another street, Vanderbilt, cuts in somewhere there. It might -- Where they had houses. And we would order our lunch in someone's house. We'd eat on their co-- I remember eating on their couch and on their lounge.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It was very interesting. And they would have a table or two, and another friend would get a table or two, and we would talk across.

INTERVIEWER: And do you-- would you -- would you ring their doorbell and walk into their house?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The door was open. Yes. They knew it was our lunch time. They -- A big horn was [brung/rung?] for lunchtime or something.

INTERVIEWER: And so you would walk in and walk into the kitchen, and say, "I'll have a sandwich"?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. You ordered the sandwich from them. They were the cooks. They made the sandwiches.

INTERVIEWER: In the house.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In the house. It became their -- the restaurant. In their house. And you asked for -- they --

if you ordered something -- I don't remember how we ordered it. Or whether you ordered it as you walked in. You got a number, H1. And so you would wait till H1 was -- And they would bring it to you. Wherever your were, they would tell you. You would raise your hand and they would bring it to you.

INTERVIEWER: Inside the house.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, inside the house.

INTERVIEWER: But this was just a house where people lived?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I am -- I don't know, where pe-- Their working place. It was their house, but lunchtime it was their working place.

INTERVIEWER: And was it crowded with people from the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Not crowded, but enough for everyone to sit down.

INTERVIEWER: Um ... What about the other women that you worked with. You said -- you, um, said there were some Black women. What other ethnic groups or backgrounds did the women have?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: There were -- very good, very good. It was the same as I, very patriotic. They were very patriotic, and very nice. There were Indian women, there were Black women, [35:00] There were people that I never

associated with before. And after that I did. Because I found they were the same.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of people had you known before?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Uh, family type. I'd lived in Middle Village, and we all were brought up by the same rules -- rules and regulations -- to be good, and to honor people. What else can I say?

INTERVIEWER: Um, Sidonia was telling me that she is Jewish, and that there were some Jewish women who worked in the Navy yard also.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But also other ki-- Italian, other kinds of background.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, right, I'm Jewish. And there were Italian people, there -- It didn't matter. We didn't care. We never asked. Be-- we -- It's funny, when you -- when you're with certain groups, you never ask. And there's no reason to -- not to ask. There's not reason not -- to -- to ask, because everyone was the same. Now here in Century Village, most of us are Jewish, but now -- we were, to begin with, but now in the selling and buying, we're not. I mean, we have some Haitians, some Blacks, here in there. We're over, uh, 1600 people here. You wouldn't believe it, but nobody comes out -- you know, we come out with a very

hot (inaudible) [36:42] walk to the pool, but otherwise people don't walk -- come out. They congregate on the street. They congregate near the pools, and the street.

INTERVIEWER: What about at the Navy yard? Was there a lot of -- did you walk among buildings? Did you move around the yard a lot, or --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No.

INTERVIEWER: No.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: You weren't allowed to.

INTERVIEWER: What --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Because of safety reasons.

INTERVIEWER: What did they say exactly?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: You know, do your work and go home.

And while you're working, you stay in your building. And if you have to go to other buildings, you needed a pass.

INTERVIEWER: And how was that pass checked? Who would be looking at that pass?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, at the front of the building when you walk in. It'd have to -- They know. They've already been told who's coming there. So they know. They check it out that way. They have their system of checking out and -- They know what they're doing. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Um ... And did you go to other buildings sometimes?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Sometimes I did go to other buildings.
To do with the work. Or to discuss certain things.

INTERVIEWER: But in terms of your work, it sounds like it was
all in Building 4? The steel shop, and then the [mold
block?].

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. But there may have been other
buildings that I don't know of that did the same thing.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Because a ship is very big. And they
made a lot of ships.

INTERVIEWER: When you were -- were you aware of whether your
work was going toward building ships or repairing ships?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We weren't repairing. Repair was sent
somewhere else.

INTERVIEWER: OK. So you were building original ships?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the names?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Uh ... The president who said "the buck
stops here." He gave -- he was the one that -- he and his
daughter.

INTERVIEWER: Came to the --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Christened the ship. What was the
name? The [Kirsage?] [39:07]

INTERVIEWER: Eisenhower?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. -- Not Eisenhower. The -- the president -- he was a haberdasher. He had a store. His daughter played the piano. Eisen-- Not Eisenhower. Before Eisenhower. Oh, he was before Eisenhower. Before ... A very plain president.

INTERVIEWER: Truman?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Truman.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Truman. I think the *Kirsage*.

INTERVIEWER: That was the name of the ship.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That was the name. We were building that at the time. The *Kirsage*. And I think he and his daughter threw the champagne bottle on the base of it.

INTERVIEWER: [40:00] Were you ever -- Were you present when the ships were launched?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Sometimes. Some -- And some of them I don't even know which ones -- I'd -- The *Kirsage* I think I was there. Because I remember [doing/during/Dawn?] there. And we all said, "Sing a song." She used to sing, and they said -- and we just thought her voice was flat. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Um, and so was that -- so -- and you had worked on that ship?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I don't remember. Yeah. I don't remember if I worked on it or not. I can't -- I know --

No, I didn't work on it. I didn't because it was later that they champagned it. It was after that that they champagned it, so -- But I did. I think I did. Because I think I said I worked on it.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's why I had to go to see that ship.

INTERVIEWER: And was that -- did -- were you at work at that time? You left work to watch the christening?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No, no, no.

INTERVIEWER: You were not working anymore at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, I wasn't working there anymore.

INTERVIEWER: Uh, any other names of ships that you remember that you worked on?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh ... Offhand, no. Offhand I used to remember every single ship. And now I don't. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: That's a lot to remember.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well that -- if I remember it I'll let you know, because I -- on those papers they have the names of some of the ships.

INTERVIEWER: Great.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And -- Oh. I must find them. I know they're in one -- someone's drawer here.

INTERVIEWER: That's fine. If you ever find them, that would be really wonderful to know that.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: All right. All right.

INTERVIEWER: So, let's see. Um ... Were there any other times when the Navy yard gathered together, the people there, as a kind of celebration? I know that you -- that that would happen sometimes for christening the ships.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They would celebrate something, and I wouldn't remember now. Because -- All I remember is that we -- it was fun to go out on Sands Street. It was fun to see everyone. We'd say, "Hello. [Hi ya/How are ya?]" And working the graveyard -- I was going back and forth. Working the graveyard shift, we'd have to take the elevator up and down. And so we would make sure to always make sure that there were a group of people in the elevator.

INTERVIEWER: How come?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Because it was late at night. This is the first time that most of the women were out so late at night. Working a graveyard shift.

INTERVIEWER: And were there men working that shift also? Or mostly women?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Mostly women. Mostly women.

INTERVIEWER: Was it as crowded as night -- at night at the Navy yard as it was during the day?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We never knew. Because we never had to go outside.

INTERVIEWER: What about going in and out on Sands Street?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That was lunchtime. And that was only during the day.

INTERVIEWER: What about though when you would come in and go out on the graveyard shift, did you still come in Sands Street?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. On the graveyard shift I think we had to bring our own lunch. Eat in.

INTERVIEWER: And what about coming and going? Did you still come and go through Sands Street?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And what -- talk about what you wore to work. What did you wear?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We wore heavy shoes. Heavy leather shoes. And dungarees. What do you call those? Coveralls. You know, with the straps.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's what we wore.

INTERVIEWER: Did -- did they give you those clothes at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. We bought our own.

INTERVIEWER: And did you wear those to work? Or did you change when you got there?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We wore -- we wore them to work.

INTERVIEWER: So you -- you would put those on at home.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We'd put them on at home, and we wore them home. Because I remember taking them off. I have like two days of off, and two days on of work clothes. I had to take them off to wash them, and dry them, and wear them.

INTERVIEWER: And did you work -- do you remember -- how -- [45:00] how did your work schedule go, in terms of days of the week?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, for months it went very well.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work Monday to -- six days a week, five days a week?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Five days a week.

INTERVIEWER: Was -- did you have Saturday and Sunday off? Or different days?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We had Saturday and Sunday off. The yard I think was closed -- No, it was never closed. It was never closed. Because they had, uh, living quarters there for the -- some of the [big shore?]. You know, with the badges and the -- the Navy going men that went on the ships

had living quarters there. Their living quarters were beautiful. They're still there. You must see them. On certain streets I -- they must -- I haven't read where they did away with them.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see those at the time that you worked at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did you see those?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: When I'd [go to/get out of] the car that took me, I have to walk through that neighborhood to the car.

INTERVIEWER: So it was inside the Navy yard gates, or outside?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Outside.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Do you mean Admiral's Row?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. Look at the way she remembers that. [laughs] Oh my God.

INTERVIEWER: So you would walk past those houses on the way to the car?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And what about the other military -- the guys on the ships? Did you see them very much?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No.

INTERVIEWER: So they were somewhere else.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They were somewhere else. They had other quarters.

INTERVIEWER: What about on Sands Street? Would you see sailors there?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yeah, we would see sailors. We never knew where they came from, because they wouldn't talk. And we didn't want to know.

INTERVIEWER: So you would see them, but not -- you didn't chat with them.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No.

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We were either going or coming, and they were going and coming.

INTERVIEWER: But I would think -- I mean, you were married. But some of the girls, I would think, if they were single and there were these sailors around.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Maybe they -- Yeah, but they had -- may have other places to go to.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: See, they went to other places that we didn't go. Now he's living -- no, we were just -- we worked and went home. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: So was there -- was there a separation between the married women and the single women socially?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I think socially there was, yeah. Because I'm trying to remember some of the single girls. I became friendly -- no -- with all of them. One was a dancer, one was a singer. But they -- no, they did the same, they came and went.

INTERVIEWER: So the dancer and the singer were working in the Navy yard also.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: How did that happen? Can you tell me about that?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They must have read it in the newspaper.

INTERVIEWER: And did they also do any dancing and singing?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. When we would have something, I know they would dance for -- I remember my girlfriend -- I don't even know where she is now -- she would wear a sailor's hat and do a sailor's dance and --

INTERVIEWER: At the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. Somewhere. Not while we worked, but -- it must have been recreation time or -- It was a da- - I remember her dancing, and I ... I know her mother lived in the Bronx, because I took the train that's there up to the Bronx. And they had, um, a store -- wool store, where

you made babies' clothing and your own shirts, sweaters and things. And I was friendly with her a long time. And she came out to Middle Village to see us.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember her name?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I just -- I can't remember it.

INTERVIEWER: So she did a performance at the Navy yard at some point.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. I know ... and I can't think of her name right now. And I was looking at her pictures. But her name would be on the pictures. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: And you have pictures of her?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. Oh yeah. I can -- well I [can have?] a phone call. I just didn't have time.

INTERVIEWER: No, I know, it was very short notice.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I know, and then I have [this?] in between, and everything -- In the past few weeks I've been [50:00] so busy with myself, such stupid things. And then my grandson, and he's, uh, brought [this/his] intended here. I wanted to meet her. And I'll have a wedding soon, and I'll -- I -- the thought of going to New York in an airplane, oh.

INTERVIEWER: Are you going to -- going to --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I'll have to go. It's my grandson's wedding. And how does it look for the grandmother not to come.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They have dialysis there also. Everywhere I want to go, I have a place worker that can place me wherever I want to go. They have dialysis. I can't let it go more than a day and a half.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: So they have to place me somewhere where the day that I'm free I'll go.

INTERVIEWER: You know, another possibility is that if you brought any of these papers to New York, I could meet you there, and we could look at them together.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, that's an idea.

INTERVIEWER: I mean, it might be too much to try to add that to --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I can add that.

INTERVIEWER: But if you could, I could meet you anywhere. And we could talk about them. I could even make copies of them if that would be helpful.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Right. Right.

INTERVIEWER: Um, if you wanted the Navy yard to have any of that, I could copy them and then you could take the originals back.a

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: All right.

INTERVIEWER: So we can --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, that would be an idea.

INTERVIEWER: When is the wedding?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Not -- not until next June or July.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Well we can see. But that --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: All right.

INTERVIEWER: That might be an idea.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's a good idea.

INTERVIEWER: Um --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: You'll leave me an address where I can mail you.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. And I will also -- I'll give you my phone number --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And your phone number at home.

INTERVIEWER: And I can also call you.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Um. So, OK, so there were some singers and dancers there. That's interesting. Um ...

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I don't remember where or what. I'll have to find out -- Maybe Sidonia would remember.

INTERVIEWER: She didn't mention them.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Lilly. My girlfriend's name was Lilly.

Oh, I don't know her second name. Lilly. I remember
Lilly.

INTERVIEWER: OK. And she did a dance with a sailor hat.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: With a sailor hat. Oh, I remember the
dance [itself?] now.

INTERVIEWER: And was she single, or was she married?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: She was married. Because her husband
also was in the Army. That's how she came there.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Um, you -- Now, you had an accident while
you were working there. But, in general, what was the --
was there a sense that the work was dangerous?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. It was just that they didn't look
-- the lifters -- it moved on the lifters, and I was -- it
was too close to me, and I was too close to the -- I forget
what they call them. They were all on the top of the
ceiling of the, uh, building. They lifted up things and
[put/pulled/poured?] --

INTERVIEWER: Like cranes?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Cranes. The cranes. They -- they were
cranes.

INTERVIEWER: And they were moving something at the same time
that you were in that spot.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They were moving -- it moved by itself. It just moved. You know, the cranes are not -- they're on chains. And so the chains moved. And I never made anything of it. And they all said I was a fool for not doing it. I could -- but I made very little of it. [laughs] And I just didn't want to make any case out of -- I couldn't -- they gave me -- it was about four weeks. And I was home. And I thought that was it. That was good.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And I was all better. So I [left to their fact?] [54:08] [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: And then you moved to the mold loft.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. And then I moved to the mold loft.

INTERVIEWER: And then, were you still welding at all after you got to the mold loft?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I don't think so. I don't think I was doing welding after that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you-- it sounds like-- Did you-- would you say that you had a good time working at the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes, I did.

INTERVIEWER: What -- what did you enjoy the most?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I enjoyed -- I enjoyed meeting my friends. I met Sidonia there. And it's 32 years that we

know each other. I met other girls there, and she was friendly with other girls. And, you know, I enjoyed it. And it was like the end of a life, because my husband came home and I had children right after that.

INTERVIEWER: How many children did you have?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Two boys.

INTERVIEWER: I have two boys.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh that's -- They say you stay young if you have two boys. [55:00] A fortune teller, a gypsy fortune teller once told me that. I said, "Thank you."
[laughs]

INTERVIEWER: And did you stay in, um, in the same place where you had been living in Brooklyn?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. I stayed in Middle Village until -- oh, about 14 later -- years later after the war.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Uh ... Do you remember anything else? IS there anything we haven't talked about about the work itself? Things that you did, either in the steel shop or in the mold loft?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, in the mold loft there was no [other?] work. I made templates. The mold loft is the template maker. It's a separate little loft on top of the building. I think it was on top of 4 building, I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: And did you stay friendly with some of the girls you had known in the other place?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In the mold loft, no. Mold loft I didn't. We didn't -- I used to be friendly with the girls downstairs. So at lunch time we would eat together. Mold loft, I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: Did you -- where did you meet Sidonia?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In the Building 4. I wonder if she went to the mold loft. I don't remember her ever --

INTERVIEWER: So did you meet new people? You had different friends in each place?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Lillian, the dancer, I met in the mold loft.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Change my tape. So Lillian was in the -- whoa! [fumbling with cassette tape] Lillian was in the mold loft.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Sidonia was in the seal shop. Those are the only two I remember.

INTERVIEWER: What about the ships? Did you go on a ship at all?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. I never went on a ship.

INTERVIEWER: Did you expect that you would be able to go on one?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. If we were working in there, we never went on a ship. There were certain girls that they had do the work on the ship. And they may have done repair work. Or maybe when work had to be placed there, from the seal loft and the mold loft, that these girls did. And I remember, there was a group of Black girls on the ships. That's all I remember.

INTERVIEWER: So you only knew Black girls who went on the ship?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: The -- I think no. I'm sure they had White. I'm not sure though. I'm not positive.

INTERVIEWER: How did you know about the Black girls going on the ship?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Only from talking. From hearing talk.

INTERVIEWER: Was that something people wanted to do, go on the ships?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I don't know. I'll never know.

INTERVIEWER: How did you feel about it?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I didn't care.

INTERVIEWER: Did you see the ships?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. I -- They were over on another place. I know where they were over near Flushing Avenue and -- Because we had to come over -- in [Green Point?].

We had to come over another avenue, and I would see the ships there. Otherwise I would never see them.

INTERVIEWER: Were you near the dry docks?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. We were near the streets of -- Where the trolleys [sat around?].

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if that was Navy Street. Was it Navy Street that crossed Sand Street?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: We were near the Navy Street. We were right near the Navy Street.

INTERVIEWER: So it -- You were away from the water.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, the water was over here. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Now, you say that you -- Were there some men working with you? You said it was mostly women, but some men.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Some -- some men. [60:00] Yeah, there was -- they were married with children. They lived in Middle Village.

INTERVIEWER: But what about in -- where you worked?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Where I worked, none of the men from Middle Village worked there.

INTERVIEWER: But did you work with men?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: There was some men.

INTERVIEWER: And what were they like?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They were very nice. Very nice. The same -- the same married man you would [meet at/be?] home with children. They would talk about the children or anything like that.

INTERVIEWER: And now, probably they had not worked with women for very long.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I guess not.

INTERVIEWER: But did they -- How did they respond to having women working with them?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They -- they were kind. You know, if I -- if I didn't fall -- then I didn't fall, now I'm falling. If anyone would fall, they would help them up. Or they -- you know, they would be helpful.

INTERVIEWER: How did you like working with men?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I didn't mind it at all. It was like working with my father or my brother.

INTERVIEWER: Did it feel, uh --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They were older men. Because these were men that were married with children.

INTERVIEWER: Mm hm. Was that something that you did later in your life? Did you work after your husband came back?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No.

INTERVIEWER: You were -- you were a mom, and a --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, I didn't work.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever miss working after that? Did you wish you worked at all?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No.

INTERVIEWER: And did you find yourself -- did you think much about those days at the Navy yard as your life went on?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Sure I do. I think about them all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, I think about them *all* the time.

INTERVIEWER: Why -- why do you think you think about it so much?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, because it's so different than the average work. Women do not do that type of work. Maybe they do today, because they fix cars today, they do all -- but in those days they didn't. And it's something different. That's what it was, it was something different. And it was a learning of something different.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel proud?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: What?

INTERVIEWER: Was it -- did you feel pride at being able to do that?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh sure. I felt that I was doing something for the war. They *needed* someone to do this.

They needed someone. And so that's why -- I said, I'll volun-- I'll see if I can do or I'll do it.

INTERVIEWER: Had you done physical work? You said you'd shoveled things, you'd caulked the -- the, um, bathtub. Had you done a lot of physical work at home before that?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, cleaning the house. [laughs] And shoveling the snow.

INTERVIEWER: Had you -- What kind of education did you have before that?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, I had high school, and I had two years of college. And we didn't learn any difficult work in any one of them.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go to college and to high school?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: High school was Grover Cleveland High School. Which is right near the Navy yard. It's on the same -- it's on Metropolitan Avenue where it ends. New Town Creek, I think. And, uh, the college was, uh, Brooklyn College.

INTERVIEWER: And, uh -- but you did not finish at collge?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No.

INTERVIEWER: Why not?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I had children, at that time.

INTERVIEWER: So the college was after the Navy yard.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes. Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: OK. So your husband came back from war and you went to college?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. College wasn't after the -- College wasn't after the Navy yard, college was before. -- No. -- Yeah. Now I'm getting confused. 1939 I graduated high school. So in '40 I went to Queen's College, not Brooklyn College, I'm sorry. Queen's College. And so it had to be after that. [65:00] Because I remember some years.

INTERVIEWER: So you -- so between high school and the Navy yard was the college.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah. Right. Right.

INTERVIEWER: So did you -- do you think you left to get married maybe?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. That's -- I think that's what it was.

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet your husband in college?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, I met him -- I was looking for a job at the time and I met him. [And he's going to?] put their mail out alphabet-- alphabetically order. And so I went to see if I could do the job. That was before. That was before the Brooklyn Navy yard. Because I didn't go in until he was in the Army. And he was in the Army in 1941,

I think it was. Right? If I remember the year. 1940 or 41.

INTERVIEWER: And so, uh -- And then you came to the Navy yard right at that time?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you may have come before Sidonia then.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I think I could. I may have come before she did. I don't remember, whether I -- maybe I -- maybe I did, maybe I didn't.

INTERVIEWER: Right. OK. And when -- when you see the papers, then we'll know for sure.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Right. [laughs] Because now it's the -- when my mind starts to think -- become jumbled. When I start to think of one to the other.

INTERVIEWER: Um ... Well, this is great. I feel like you've answered all of my questions.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: All right. And I'll -- Oh, I'm gonna look -- I'll have more time. Now, it's just that I can't handle things -- like, if I take out a batch of papers from the drawer, I can't look --

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Are you right handed? Oh, that's hard.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, I can't hold a spoon. My grandson came last night with his girl, and I wanted to make a good impression. She comes from Pennsylvania

somewhere. And I'll tell you, I have two grandsons and a granddaughter, and both of them are so precious, so wonderful. They grew up -- the elder boy is 25, this one is 23. And the older girl is 27. She doesn't -- she's going with someone, but I don't know how steady. I don't ask. When you want to -- They don't get married when I want, they'll get married when they want. So they're so -- they -- my older grandson is such a -- like a [doe?].

[1:00:10] Oh, I love him so. Anyway, he gave his girlfriend a ring on the airplane, and she was so happy.

INTERVIEWER: On the way here?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: On the way to see me. That was the -- just last summer. She cried all the way. And when I saw her, I cried. I cried all the time they were here, because she was so happy. And I was so happy. But they'll get married in June or July, so ...

INTERVIEWER: And where -- and they live in -- where do they live?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: New York.

INTERVIEWER: In the city? In Manhattan?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In Wood-- Yeah. In the four towns.

And -- I forget where the --

INTERVIEWER: Are they in Brooklyn?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, in New York.

INTERVIEWER: New York State.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: New York State, yeah. New York. In Queen's.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It's not in Queen's, it's out of the -- it's the four towns of Long Island.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, I see. That is really exciting. So then you would maybe have some great grandchildren.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: All I remember is crying the whole time -- every time -- a real beautiful ring. And they took me out, and they -- I didn't have this. I was dancing with them. I don't dance. [laughs] It's only a few months ago. Well, I'll tell you, that's what it is, I found it here too. The aging of the people, old and young, ten years is old and young. Those ten years younger than me came after me. And those ten years older than me -- let's see, I'm 84 now. In June I'll be --

INTERVIEWER: You'll be 84?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: [70:00] In June I think I'll be 84. June I'll be 84. I'm 83 now.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Is that right?

INTERVIEWER: Well, let's see, you were --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I was born in nine--

INTERVIEWER: You were born in '23.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: In '23, yeah. 1923.

INTERVIEWER: So in 2003 you were 80. So you are 83.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Eighty-three. So I'll be 84 in a few months. And uh, those that are 74, those are babies here. I mean, they're -- they come right after they get their Social Security.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And -- So we call those the Baby Boomers. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Those are your Baby Boomers. Before I turn off these recorders, I just want to ask you, is there anything else you remember when you think of that time? Any other impression or memory you have that we haven't talked about? I just don't want to miss anything.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I have to write you, because I couldn't think of anything now. All I know is I enjoyed working there, and I know that I had the day shift, and then I had the night shift. That I do know. How we got [out of?]
[1:11:30] it I don't know why or when. That's the way it was. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'm going to turn these off.

[END OF AUDIO FILE #1]

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: -- you had to saw the -- you had to saw the sides of the, uh, template.

INTERVIEWER: So you -- did you use the saw?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes, I used the saw. I used to --

INTERVIEWER: Was it hard to use that saw?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Was it what?

INTERVIEWER: Was it difficult?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No, very easy. You push a button. You push a button. But you had to know how to use it. They didn't anyone near the machines unless they knew how to use it. And they would teach you. It -- in one lesson they'd teach you, if you needed this 8 inches by 4 inches, you put in 8 inches, you push a button, and -- and it comes out the other end, and you get it at the other end.

INTERVIEWER: Did you hold the wood when you were using the saw?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No, I didn't have to hold it. because there were ledges that you put the wood against. The wood would stay there. When you pushed the button, the wood went into the saw. That's all.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And so you would --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And --

INTERVIEWER: Go on.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: You had to stand by the button. You push it, and you had to push it off.

INTERVIEWER: I see. So you would saw your wood, bring it over.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's right. Put it on the template. It was part of the template.

INTERVIEWER: Put it on the template. And then what?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And hammer it. You know, hammer it on to the template. With the steel shovel underneath, and your hammer in your hand, and hammer it. [It's things back in those days?]. [laughs] Oh, gee, do I remember -- I'm trying to remember but I can't.

INTERVIEWER: Did you sometimes -- did you help each other? Did it take two people to do this work?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Some of the patterns did. And some of the patterns didn't. Some of the patterns were very simple, and some of them weren't. Sometimes I had someone else help me. I would have someone in charge help me. Or someone that they had to do something else to the pattern, that I wouldn't know.

INTERVIEWER: Like what?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Well, they -- they got the map, and they knew exactly -- maybe another piece had to be added to

the pattern to make it a pattern. And so they would come over and tell me.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And did sometimes they hol-- help you hold the wood, to hammer?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It became a very big pattern, yes. But if it wasn't too big -- it would run about, I'd say 3 feet to 4 feet, or 5 feet. Which is something a woman can handle. Maybe the bigger patterns they had men work on.

INTERVIEWER: And would someone come and check to see if you had done it correctly?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes. Absolutely. The supervisor would check everything.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever make a mistake.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I'm sure I did. I'm sure. He would check any mistakes and have you fix them. But it's all written out with numbers. And it's very hard. But the -- it's a human error.

INTERVIEWER: So you would just fix it.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: If they -- oh, absolutely. There are human errors in everything. [75:00] And they would tell you that. That's why they -- you had to be very careful, and they have to have the supervisor. And there's someone -- and I can't remember his name -- who checked the supervisors.

INTERVIEWER: So that was an even higher supervisor.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: That's right. But he wasn't called a supervisor.

INTERVIEWER: How many supervisors were there?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: What?

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how many supervisors there were?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, about -- two I remember. Two. One checked the other, that's all. But there were a lot of supervisors around.

INTERVIEWER: And how many -- So there were a couple of supervisors, and then how many people were they supervising?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh, 40, 50. Don't forget, I was only one shift. I don't know who else they supervised.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember, when it was the day shift, what time you arrived and what time you left?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: It was in the -- eight. And out at 3 or 4 o'clock.

INTERVIEWER: So it was still daylight and --

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: What would you -- what would you do after you left?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I would go right to my house, in Middle Village. I lived in my mother's house. I was born there, and after I was married I lived there.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: I would go home to see if I got any mail from the Army. Run home.

INTERVIEWER: What time did you go to bed?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: About 8, 9 o'clock.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to -- did you go to Manhattan, go to shows, anything like that?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yes. Oh yes. I went to shows with my friends. I had a lot of friends. That were in the same boat as I.

INTERVIEWER: Were those mostly friends from Middle Village, or from the Navy yard?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Sometime from the Navy yard and sometimes from Middle Village. No, from the Na-- let's see, where did they live? Sidonia, where did they live. Lilly I remember -- they'd always come to my house. Because one lived in the Bronx, and I lived in Middle Village. It was too far to travel. And I had -- my mother had room for sleeping. So they came.

INTERVIEWER: So they would sleep over.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: They'd sleep over. And go home during mid-day. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: On the weekend.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Yeah, on the weekend. Oh, sure. You couldn't take time off from work.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember what kinds of shows you saw?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Ah ... I thought I'd seen ... Ruby Keller. She danced, "Oh come and see, so dancing see. And (inaudible) lives on, take me to 1940."

INTERVIEWER: Ruby -- what was her last name?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Ruby Keeler.

INTERVIEWER: K-

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: K-E-E-L -- Keeler -- L-E-R.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Huh. And was it -- what kinds of places did she dance in? Big halls or smaller?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Smaller. Smaller.

INTERVIEWER: Like nightclub. Like in a sort of nightclub.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: No. No. It was in the music hall, like the big place.

INTERVIEWER: I see. Anything else you remember hearing or seeing?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: Uh. Oh, there's so much. It's all jumbled in my mind. I remember I used to go to Grover Cleveland High School to see my teachers, because it was on

the way to the Brooklyn Navy yards. Or on the way home.

And I remember the music teacher, Mrs. Brown. [laughs]

INTERVIEWER: Wow. So you would go say hello?

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: So I -- Of course, I went and said --

Sometimes they were there, sometimes they weren't. I'd say

hello. And that to me was something, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PEARL MARGOLIS HILL: And I remember -- I remember other

things. And right now I don't -- that's all I remember.

INTERVIEWER: Well, that's OK, that's all right.

[END OF AUDIO FILE #2]