

Antoinette Irrera Mauro
Brooklyn Navy Yard Oral History Collection
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Transcript edited by interviewer

SIDE A

Maiden name: Antoinette Irrera

How and when did you come to work at the Navy Yard?

Well, there was a war going on, and my parents wanted me to go to college. I said, No, I have to help my country. I'd like to help my country. So I took this defense course, which they were pushing all the students to do. And the defense course was a drafting class that we took downtown on Lawrence Street, and then we went to Pratt Institute for Foundry Courses, and I don't remember if we did welding, but we did the foundry, and we went to class, and we did this all summer long from say July to September. Then they sent me over to the Navy Yard, and I was put in the electrical department and I was working on damage control, which is when the draughtsman or the engineer goes down, the ship's come in damaged, they change the blueprints, and then they work from what they do. You know, the corrections that they make. We work on the actual prints. So that's what I did during World War II.

And what did they call that job?

They called it a draughtswoman. Okay? And it was myself and another 18-year-old girl, and the rest were all older men. See, the department was huge. But I worked for a group of twenty-five men, you know, and they were very nice, very respectful. I always remember that, how nice they were to us. And I worked there from 1943 til 1945 when I was laid off after the war. Then they called me back in '47, and then I was laid off again in September of '49, and I resigned in 1951 because I was pregnant with my son. Then after the war I met my husband there on the bus line waiting for the bus. He worked in the Navy Yard—he worked in the blueprint department and then he worked in the library. And it was strange, we had to clock in. And if we clocked in at 8:00, we were late. We had to clock in a couple of minutes before 8:00, otherwise we'd have to take a whole hour, you know? So we used to run for that clock like anything. And then when we came in the gate we had to show ID, badges, if we forgot our badge they wouldn't let us in. They were very strict about that.

Which gate did you enter through?

Vanderbilt Avenue.

Where were you living then?

I was living on Gaffney place in Bay Ridge, between 90th and 92nd St. And when I used to go, I used to take the 3rd Avenue bus, and that was such a long ride, and then I'd get off at Sands Street, and then from Sands Street I would walk to Vanderbilt Avenue, and that's quite a walk. And then someone told me, "Get off at Pacific Street, by the LIRR, and there's a bus there that brings you right to the Vanderbilt Avenue gate."

Why did you not enter at the Sands Street gate?

Because I used to always walk on the outside. I could have entered there I guess and walked around, but it was still a walk from Sands Street. Now it's...they tow your car. I've been there...

Do you remember what building you worked in?

I worked in Building 3. And then later on, from building...there used to be a ramp that we used to walk to 77 to have the blueprints printed, whatever, you know? We used to walk to building 77. Then they moved us to building 77 and we worked there for a long time. And then when the Franklin was hit, I saw it come in. See, they wouldn't let the ladies down the ships. They let the men, you know, because they were afraid sailors would be, you know, walking around naked or be exposed, whatever it is, you know.

So you weren't on the ships?

No, but my husband—he wasn't my husband then—was a sailor on the Miller. And he saw the Franklin burning and the Miller pulled up to take the servicemen off the ship. But first they got the officers off, and they said "Cut the rope."

What year was that?

That was...the war was over in '45, so I think the Franklin must have been hit, I guess maybe '44. 1944. I saw it come in, and the whole front was off completely. It was towed into the Navy Yard and they did the repair.

Did you often see ships?

Oh all the time, but we never went on them.

Did you mind that?

Yeah, we wanted to go on, just to see what it was like. And when the war was over, we all took a picture. I have that in Pennsylvania. The whole electrical department on the grounds of the Navy Yard. But they didn't let the ladies walk around there too much. On the ships. Or in the yard. Everything was tightly controlled. Our movements were limited.

What would happen if you tried to move around?

They would stop you, you know. I'll tell you, it was a nice experience to be there and to be working with them, you know?

In what way?

Well, I thought it was nice, you know? I enjoyed it. We worked six days a week, even Saturday, and I went home with \$27 a week, and I was a rich woman. And all my friends were getting \$17, \$18 in the bank, and here I was making a lot of money, but I was working Saturday. And \$27 a week went a long way. It was very nice. It was a nice experience.

What hours of the day did you work?

We worked from 8:00 to 4:30. Saturday included. The only day we had off was Christmas day. New Years day we worked. We worked all the time. We were never in the yard, we were always in the office working on the plans of the ships. We saw...the Missouri was launched there. And then I have some pictures of another launching. Oh, and when there was a launching of a ship, you know where we used to go? On the other side of the river. So we could really see it. Because if you were in the Navy Yard, you couldn't really see it that good. This way you actually see the ship coming out...I'll show you the pictures [shows pictures]. See, this is the launching of the ship...see, we were on the other side of the river. Isn't that something? And this is the school...

Are you on the East River here?

We're on the other side of the river. The Navy Yard is on this side, and we're on the other side. You can have these pictures. And here we are coming out of the drafting of the school, where we took...see us with our boards? There I am in the middle? With that drafting board, see? And there we are, all of us. But we didn't all work in the Navy Yard...they put people in different places.

This is the summer course you talked about? Do you remember the names of the other girls?

No, I don't. See, they didn't work in the yard. This one worked in the yard...they worked there during the war. They pulled me back twice, and then I quit because I was expecting my son. I quit in 1951. Oh, and here's the bosses. Here's my boss. This is the electrical department; he was one of the bosses, see? And there's my husband, but this was after the war. But I worked for him during the war, and he was head of the blueprint department. Mr. Massaro, he was my boss. He was head of damage control during the war. He he was head of the blueprint, I forget his name. That's why you have to write names down. My husband, when he came out of the service, he went to work in the Navy Yard, and he worked in the blueprint room for this man. So then, because they drafted him. And then they put him in the technical library. He had a very good job. He was a supervisor after a while. But then they wouldn't give him the job because his boss

was a college graduate, and his boss said, You know more about the job...he had to break in two different bosses? So finally I told him, Why don't you ask for the position? So he asked for it, and his boss went against him because he said—Nicholas was his boss—he said, No, because you're not a college graduate. You have to have a degree in library work to get the position. So this fellow spoke up for him. So then finally I told him, Ask again for the job. So he asked for it and finally this man spoke up for him, says, Look, he knows more than any boss we can put in here. So we'll make him the boss, we'll give him the job. And they gave it to him. It went well. He was there, Oh my God, a long time—until it closed, until they had no more department. And then what happened, the Navy Yard closed, and there was an applied science laboratory, a technical library, and the boss there sent for him, and he made him an assistant, and he saved him his job. So finally, his boss quit and then he got the job. Louis Mauro. He worked in the Navy Yard from, say, '47 to when it closed. And then he went to the technical library.

Did you work in the same department?

No, he worked downstairs, I worked upstairs. And I met him on the bus line. You know, on Atlantic Avenue, it's so cold when you wait for the bus? And that line was so long there used to be [inaudible]. We used to all line up right in back of each other to take the bus to go to the Navy Yard. Sometimes the bus to go to Vanderbilt Avenue would fill up, so we'd have to wait for another bus. Then it used to take me so long, so I said, Let me get off at DeKalb Avenue...and take the bus there. So I was talking to one of the fellows, and he said to me, You know what? Why don't you just go to Atlantic Avenue, there's a bus that brings you right to the gate. So after doing this for about over six months, I found an easier way...

Talk more about exactly what your work was.

The ships used to come in damaged, and the draughtsman and the engineer would observe the damage and do new wiring on the blueprint and mark it up for us so we could follow it, and then give us the plan and we would correct the plan.

So he was writing down on the blueprint what needed to be fixed.

Yeah, the draughtsman that went down on the ship would see what was destroyed, and had to be fixed, and correct it on the blueprint, and then give it to us, and we would have to fix it on the actual plan. And that would go down there where they...for the new wiring, whatever they had to do, that would go down to the shipworker, and he would correct it.

When you say you fixed it on the plan, what does that mean exactly?

See, they gave us the blueprint. And they would correct the blueprint, and then they gave us the actual drawing, and we would have to find that spot and correct it on the actual drawing.

How is a drawing different from a blueprint?

Well, it was the same thing, but the drawing had the old errors, had what was damaged.

I see. So the blueprint showed the original...

Showed the original, and then they would correct it. In other words, all we had to do was follow their corrections.

Were you actually doing the electrical work?

[SEEMS LIKE A PROBLEM W/OTHER RECORDER DISCOVERED AT THIS POINT]

No, we were correcting what they did. We were draughtswomen. In other words, they would correct what was destroyed and figure out new wiring, you know, they have to replace it with new wiring, and then give us the print with the correction, and then give us the plan the way it was, and we would have to fix it, you know. Lettering and everything, you know, we had to do that.

So you had to create clear instructions for the technician who would be actually fixing the damage.

Yeah, but then our work was checked too. Make sure we got everything. Goes through a lot of hands.

What kind of tools did you use?

Oh, I had a regular draughtswoman's set. Wish I could find it, I'd show it to you. I still have it. [goes to look] I may have given it away. They were like special tools...there was a tool to correct the error, you know. A compass, things like that. You fill the ink in and you had a [lettering tube?]. But then after the war when they called me back, they had a very strange thing. They had these plastics, and they'd give us sheets, you had to have very good eyesight...and then they would put the plastics above the light, and you would have to correct it and find the right piece, and push it down...it was very delicate work. When I think of us staring into that light all day long—this was after the war—it affected our eyesight, no doubt.

In that case, were you creating instructions?

Yes, from instructions. But they gave us sheets, you know like these labels they send you with your name on it? But they were all different labels, like "belt," and the words were all labeled. You had to find the word on these sheets and put it on the plan. That was very difficult.

Give me a sense of how your day unfolded.

I'd get there, and it was hectic. Then I went and I sat down. It was a drawing board...like a draughtsman's table, like an artist would have. A table like that, and you sat there, and the men were on this side, say, and we sat at these [?]. . .and that's where the plans were, and we just started working like that. We had a half hour for lunch, and then I think that was it. We used to get a ten minute break when we could go the ladies room and relax a few minutes, you know, that was it. It was a pretty hectic day. You came in, they handed you what you had to do. And he was a wonderful boss. He never pushed us, he was just wonderful.

And there were only two women?

The only two women. Twenty-seven people. See, the electrical department was divided in groups, and we were in damage control. There were twenty-seven people in that department, and we were the only two girls. Just out of high school, and I tell you, they were wonderful to us. She was doing the same thing as me, but she would talk and talk and we used to have a good time together. We faced each other. The thing is, she always got blamed, and I used to [hand to?] her, you know? One time we had to black out mistakes—on the blueprint, no—on the plan we had to black it out with dark ink, the errors, you know, before we did it on the real plan. And his assistant, Mr. Kane, he was a very nice man, very stern, and I heard him say, “Oh, what a mess she made out of this. Look at what a mess. She's always too busy talking, that's her problem. Wait'll I get hold of her...” And I could hear him because he was in back of me, I was here, and she was on the side of me. I heard him mumbling under his breath. So I went over to him and I said, “Mr. Kane, that's my work.” He kind of had a crush on me, he liked me better. And he said, “Oh, you're new here, let me explain it to you, how it's done...” It was really my work! I had to confess.

When you talk about blacking out the blueprint, can explain what you mean by that?

When they showed us the damage that was done, we used to have to take some black paint, whatever it was, and put it right over the mistakes, you know? I guess before we went to the actual plan. So that's where I made a mess, blacking it out. To correct it with the new, you know. I don't remember every detail.

How long would you work on a particular blueprint?

It took a while. Maybe it would take a day. It all depends how many corrections it had. Maybe you'd get through in a couple hours, an hour, but if it was a lot of correcting...we used to love to get the prints where we didn't have to correct so much, you get more done.

I remember when the Franklin came in, they were still finding arms and legs on the ships. You know what was launched from there? The Missouri, where the peace treaty was signed. I did a lot of work on the Missouri, the battleship Missouri. And we worked on the Missouri...[story of husband's WWII reunion, going on the New Jersey] Those

battleships are huge. I think I saw more of a battleship then, with these reunions, than during the war!

Were there any women who went on ships?

In the yard there may have been. Because you had welders, you had...I don't know how far the women on the ship went. But we were all in the office.

Did you meet other people, or women, in the yard who didn't work in the electrical department?

I've met people, but ask me to remember their names, I don't...it was mostly the office. You had the blueprint department, you had typists, it was one huge floor. A whole floor. Like, even huger than the first floor in a bank. It was a huge floor, and they were all divided in sections. We were toward the back. There was like a wall, you know? There were a lot of fellas going to the drafting school, because if they worked for a defense plant—don't forget, they were all 18 years old, 19, 20, they would be drafted. See, if they worked the defense plant, it prevented them from being drafted. They didn't want to be drafted. You can see them coming out here...

[looking at pictures] And these are the big boards, but the boards we worked on was bigger than this, you know, we had desks, with a little drawer on the side.

How would you get to the other side of the river for the launching?

I think we took the train. They had benches and everything for us to sit down. You had tickets. See, here we all are. Here's the reproduction of the launching

Do you remember what it looked like during a launching?

There were people, oh my God, and the one that launched the ship...But we were so high up, building 3, if we stayed up there, you couldn't see anything. So then they decided to send us to the other side of the river with tickets, but I don't remember the ship that was launched.

How often were ships launched?

Oh, quite often. See, October 13th 1945 this was launched. The war was over. The war was over in August.

How long after the war ended were you laid off?

Oh, maybe six weeks. I was laid off September of '45. Wasn't too long. And then I had a job on Wall Street somewhere, it wasn't drafting. And I was called back in '47. And then I was laid off in September of '49, right after I was married, the same month I was

married. And then I was recalled around '50, and I stayed there until September of '52, before my son was born, I stayed there.

For the '47 recall, how many women were working there then?

Oh, there were several women working there when I was recalled.

Were you surprised to be recalled?

Yeah, and I went back because it was so much more money than I was getting.

[looking at pictures, various women who worked at at the BNY during and after the war.] This one was Margie, this one was Rose. I think this was Selma. That's the day of the launching.

Did you stay in touch with any of those girls?

Not really. For a while we did, and then you lose track of people, you know?

What do you remember about them culturally?

There were a lot of Italians there, Jewish, it was a mixed group.

Was there a racial mix?

We had some black people, not too many, but we did have them.

Was there a lot of socializing?

Oh yes, we used to have parties. Every time somebody left for another job we had a party on Michael's on Flatbush Avenue. In fact my children had an 80th birthday party for me, and they had one of the pictures blown up of me with my friends—I wish I had that snapshot—at Michael's. Oh yeah, we had a lot of good times. And then our boss, I think it was Christmas of '43, our boss had a party at his home. So how were we going to get there. Alice was the girl I worked with...how were we going to get there? We had no escort. So this engineer in the department, he was 27 years old, and he asks me says, "The boss says, Mrs. Macero, the lady needs somebody to take them to St. Albans. So how about Henry and then we'll get Benny to take—two singles guys—Benny to take Alice. So that's what they did. But my mother wouldn't hear of it. I was eighteen. She says, Oh, get in the car with somebody? How dare you? I said, We're going to Mr. Macero's house. Yeah, but how, I don't even know him. Oh, I had to bring him over, and she introduced him, and then the other fellow had to come to come too to see who I was going with. And then this guy, my mother made this big Italian dinner...he thought I was ready for a wedding. He was a bachelor, 27 years old!

But had such a nice time. We used to have a lot of get togethers. And it was the Macero's house. All the people that worked for him. Benny was Alice Wolf [?]'s escort. Mine was Henry, I don't remember his last name. Henry was an engineer, he wasn't just a good draughtsman. So my grandmother would say, "Let it go! He's an engineer." [laughing hard] My mother wouldn't hear of it. She met him, she liked him. She thought he was nice. Then he asked me out another time and my grandmother passed away...[inaudible]

To be an engineer in those days you had to be pretty good. He was pretty good. But he was a confirmed bachelor who took care of his fathers. And then Benny went into the service. He got drafted. Alice was really crazy about Benny, but he wasn't that crazy about her.

How did the men feel about getting drafted?

In those days, everyone wanted to go. You know who I thought was disappointed? The ones who maybe were married, had children, they didn't want to go.

But you mentioned that some men took the BNY course to avoid going to war...

You had those too. But you didn't have what you have now, you know? It was more positive than not. They were older men, say 37, 35—which was old to me. I think Henry was about one of the youngest, 27. They were married, they had kids. But toward the end of the war they even grabbed the ones with the kids. They were essential to the war effort.

Did your department lose people to the draft?

No, not really, they were all older men. The only one I remember going into service was Benny Alcolino, because he was younger. And he wasn't in our department, he was in the electrical group and in another department. He did not want to go. And I was writing to some fellow who I was going out with as a kid, he was a Marine, and he got very annoyed. See, I shouldn't have written that [Benny] didn't want to go. He said, "Give him some worms to eat...if he doesn't want to go, don't give him cookies and drinks." He was so annoyed with that...[laughing hard]

Were you writing to many people overseas?

Oh yeah, I'll tell you. Yes I was. But my head was on this one Marine, but unfortunately he was killed. And a whole bunch of Marines got together, and they wrote back this letter: Give Benny some snakes, give him bugs. I remember, oh...Stupid thing I did, to write a letter, here this guy doesn't want to go...here we gave him cookies, we gave him drinks, you know, we made him a care package. Sausages, whatever it was. And they were angry, oh.

Was there a party for him?

We had lots of parties. Not on the grounds of the Navy Yard, that wasn't permitted. It was evening affair; you know, we'd dress up.

Is the restaurant, Michael's, still there?

It's gone. It was right near the park, the main gate to Prospect Park. Near Grand Army Plaza. Michel's...Michael's it was called.

Why was that a popular place?

It was convenient, it wasn't too far from the Navy Yard. Like, in other words it was within our means. We had a lot of good times together.

What do you remember about the feeling of being at the Navy Yard?

I have this sort of patriotic feeling, you know? You couldn't say what you were working on, you couldn't say if you saw a ship come in, it was like Mum's the word, you know? I love this secretive business, you know? I remember I took my brother in my bedroom and I was telling him...

[SIDE B] LOST THE END OF THAT SENTENCE

They told us, Don't tell. It's hard to do. We talked to each other. We had a particular closeness in that department. And he was lame, Mr. Macero. He limped, I don't know, he had some problem with his leg or something. He was a very nice man, a very good boss. He was from St. Albans, and that's where he had the Christmas party.

Did the men flirt?

No, they were so nice. [Mr. Macero] must have told them, be respectful of these ladies. There was respect in those days. And shame. They treated us nice. They didn't curse in front of us, and they were extremely nice to us. He must have told them two young ladies were coming to work in the department, and treat them nice. And they treated us royally. We used to converse, eat with each other.

Was there a cafeteria?

There was a cafeteria, and I used to bring my lunch. My mother used to make my lunch. And then if you wanted a hot meal, you stood on line, and everything was so cheap.

Was the cafeteria in building 3?

Yeah, in building 3, and I think Building 77 had one too. We had our own cafeteria. They had to accommodate a lot of people, we had a 30 minute lunch. You had to eat in the building. And sometimes if you had to wait a long line, your whole lunch hour would

be over. So it was more practical and sensible to bring a sandwich, bring your own lunch.

Would you sit at tables with other people?

Oh yes.

Were there ever strangers there?

Always the Navy Yard group. Nobody else was in the building.

Was there ever an occasion when you had to go to other parts of the Navy Yard? For example the hospital?

Oh...during the war they pushed us to give blood. So I gave blood, but I didn't tell my mother. I told my father. And next to me—I never did it again—this big shipworker is next to me and he passes out. I said, Oh my God, what's going to happen to me? And nothing happened to me. And then I remember—remember the old Granada Hotel?—going in there and having a drink after that?

Where was that?

That was in Sands Street. They had a hospital. And they pushed us to donate blood, so I went.

So you gave the blood on Sands Street?

Inside the Navy Yard on Sands Street they had a hospital there. And we also donated blood.

Why didn't you tell your mother?

Well I figured she'd think I would die, you know? I told my father, and he said, "Well, just have a drink afterwards. So we had a drink at the Granada hotel.

On Sands Street?

No, the Granada Hotel was right across the street from the LIRR.

On Atlantic Avenue?

Yes. You had to go during the day. They might have given us the afternoon off, not the whole day. They weren't too easy about giving time off—if you didn't work, you didn't get paid. If you were late, if you clocked in at eight o'clock, they couldn't punch you in. They'd be waiting there..."Come on, come on, let's go!" But they couldn't grab your card. Not allowed, you know. So many people watching. I had to take the whole hour.

That used to burn me up, because it was a whole hour. I'd go down and have breakfast, you know.

When you say you remember seeing the Franklin come in, where were you watching that?

Oh, when I came back—when they called me back—there was no more building 3. The electrical department was in building 77. And I was right near the windows, where I was positioned. So the minute the Franklin came in, I just turned around and looked. 'Cause I was right by the window, that's where my desk was. We were high up, I remember—the 11th floor. This wasn't during the war. Wait a minute...the Franklin was hit during war, in '44.

So, did you work near a window during the war?

No. We just had a little door in the back. It wasn't a very pleasurable section, because we weren't near a window. We were up against the wall like this—desks this way, and desks on this side; you figure 27 people. When I worked with Alice, we worked right across from each other. And then we used to talk to each other a lot, so they moved us apart, I remember that...[laughing]...but he always blamed her for talking to me. But I answered her. We became close friends. Then she went to college in Ohio; she was very smart to do that.

Did you go ever to college?

No, I never did. I took a lot of night courses. My mother was very upset, she didn't want me to take the defense course. Neither did my father. They said, "Go to college." But you do things, you know?

[Alice and I] used to go to each other's house...she lived in Washington Heights, and it was like a stone's throw from the neighborhood, I think one stop on the train. Then after the war I became good friends with Rose [?]. She worked in the blueprint room. But that was after the war. We still call each other up. She lives upstate.

When we were in Building 3, we used to walk across a ramp from building 3 to building 77. I think the ramp might still be there. Then they needed building 3 for something else and they moved us to building 77. I remember during World War 11 when Roosevelt came to the Navy Yard when he was running for the fourth term, there was a little patio on the side, that's all we had. We went out on the patio to see him. We had a view down to the President. I'll tell you, a lot of people were against him, too. It was a war. Nobody likes a war, you know?

So...was there antiwar feeling at the Navy Yard?

They didn't like the war, you know? Not against...you get people against, people for...for him.

Could you see the ships you were working on?

In building 3, it was difficult. We had to go to a lower floor or go on the patio to see them. Or maybe in the yard we'd see them as we came in and out. But there was a Marine at the gate then checked our badges when we came in. If you didn't have a badge you had to go to 77 to get a replacement, or whatever. Or go home. They wouldn't let you through that gate.

[anecdote about her alcoholic neighbor who worked on the Constellation but was at lunch when the explosion happened; then died soon after. Wife of course got nothing—A.M. said it would have been so much better if he'd died on ship.]

Do you have any other memories of unusual events at the Navy Yard?

I remembered seeing Margaret Truman when she launched the Missouri. We were all on this balcony; we weren't that close but we could see. They gave us permission to see. Naturally she was at a distance; it was almost like going to a ball game. I remember her coming in and launching the ship. She hit it with a bottle, and it splashed. That I remember. It was the Missouri. They made us all go down to see her. That was a big moment, because we worked on the BB63. It was called the BB63, the Missouri. That was built in the Navy Yard. We worked on that ship when we built it.

Talk about that experience—of building a ship rather than just repairing one.

They did the wiring, and we worked on new plans then, naturally. It was a new ship. I'm trying to remember. It was similar work, but there was nothing really to correct. You just had to follow new plans.

I remember when they called me back, I went to building 77, and they had the phone on my desk. And every time there was a phone call, I had to call them. But I liked it, because I could kind of listen a little bit [inaudible] to private calls. [laughing] But then I said, Gee, I'd have to stop doing what I was doing to go get them, you know. They kind of used us when I was called back, you know.

Why was there a difference?

It was a different feeling. Different people. Mr. Macero was still there, but somehow they changed the department around, they put me somewhere else, I don't remember.

Was there a different feeling because we were no longer at war?

It's different. That's why they had all those phone calls...nothing like that during the war. You couldn't call; they had to go out in the phone and make a phone call. In an emergency, it was at Mr. Macero's desk that you were called.

Were you ever called for an emergency?

When my grandmother died he called me. That was when I was in building 3. It was after the war that I was moved to building 77, because they stopped using building 3.

Do you remember any other occasions when you watched things happen at the Navy Yard?

I remember when Diana Lane or Diana Lynn—the one who played the piano?—she was an actress. She came to the Navy Yard. They have performances during the war, services, you know, like getting off the ships. Sometimes during office hours they used to have them come. Whenever they could come. [She sounds confused about whether this was during or after the war] That I think they let us go down, and we went down when we all took a picture together when the war was over. We were down in the yard. We were down only with permission, we weren't allowed to wander. Of course the war was going on, you know. You had your badge. You couldn't go anywhere without your badge. You were checked right at the gate when you came in, and when you went out. There was a Marine there that checked your badge. Usually you had to rush, and go off to your department. There wasn't that much time. You figure 8:00 am, that's a dreadful hour.

What time did you have to leave to get to work on time?

When I used to take that third avenue bus, I'd leave pretty early. 6:30. And I remember I had that long walk from Sands Street all the way down to Vanderbilt Avenue. And I used to do it, even in the snow. Then we switched and went to by the Long Island Railroad. There was a bus right on that corner, across the street from the Williamsburg Savings Bank. And that took us to the Navy Yard. But you weren't sure if you were going to get on that bus, because that bus was filled pretty fast.

Do you remember much about Sands Street itself?

It's all changed now. When I went to get my car it was all different. I didn't remember anything. I remember the buildings be there. I remember going there and have breakfast a couple of times.

Did you see a lot of sailors?

Oh, plenty of them! The ships used to come in, they used to pull out.

Did you interact with them?

No, we didn't. I don't remember that. We stayed in our office, we interacted with each other. They weren't allowed that freedom either. If you went to the cafeteria, you saw people that worked in the building.

What did people gossip about?

Well, one of them was going out with an officer. She went out with all the officers, and they gossiped about her. And she used to come home late. She worked in the electrical department. I knew her, what the heck was her name. They were all talking about her, and I used to see the officers talk to her. She was a secretary. She was an attractive girl. And we had a matron in the ladies' room that was so nice. She'd give us ten minutes of peace to close our eyes. A black woman, what the heck was her name? [seems to be saying that there were lounge chairs in the ladies' room, where they could nap for ten minutes]

What about the male workers? Were any of them black?

No, we didn't have a black person in my department. You needed a little schooling.

Did you see any black sailors?

No. During the war they had their own groups. They weren't allowed to mingle with the regular white people.

Was there ever a job you felt you could not do?

No, I did whatever they told me to do.

[says she gets a bigger check than just social security, because gov't jobs give an annuity, which his bigger]

[Story of meeting a male draughtsman she used to know from BNY at a job later, in 1949, in another workplace]

How did your parents feel about your working in the Navy Yard?

They liked it.

Discussing Mr. Macero:

He was still there. In fact, he was there after I quit, and he took this picture with my husband. He was one of the big bosses. This was the head of the electric department. He was the head of damage control. This was—an Italian fellow—he was head of the blueprint room. And Carl was in the electric department. I remember him from during the war. This guy too I remember. And this is Mr. Macero.

Is there anything else you want to mention that we haven't touched on: a memory, a thought, an impression.

I'm trying to think. Well, like I said, it impressed me that they're all so nice, that I worked with such nice people. That was a deep impression on me.

When you remember that time, what's the first thing that comes into your mind?

I just remember that I was happy to go to work, and they made us feel so much at home, you know? It was a very happy feeling. I don't remember working at a place where I was so content. They were wonderful.

Were you more content there than in other jobs?

Oh, I think so. I really think so. There they all seemed to be very cooperative during the war.

Do you have any idea how many ships you worked on?

I remember the Missouri, the New Jersey, and Franklin. I don't remember any of the others. We worked on a lot of ships.

Were you aware of any women who went on ships?

Women who worked on the ships maybe...you know, they were welders, I don't know. They sent us to a foundry school.

Who decided where you ended up working?

Well, being that drafting was the dominant thing, I went up there. I wanted to be in the office. And my mother wouldn't hear of it.

So you had a choice. You could have done more physical work.

Yeah. See, you have to get somebody who's done the physical work. There had to be women in those shops. But I don't think they made them really run around the ship. They did what they had to do, because they were very strict about the ships. And the women. Because of the sailors walking around naked, you know.

Franklin: It was all burned, the front. They were still finding bodies up there. Arms and legs. That was a kamakasi plane that hit it, a Jap plane.

Eighteen years old, right out of high school. (when started)

Were you disappointed to be laid off?

Oh yeah, I liked it there. I figured it was only a wartime job. But I didn't expect to be called back...you know what was a shocker? When I was laid off in '49. They were

downsizing...I didn't expect to be laid off then, in September '49. And then to be recalled again in '50.

My husband, I met him in '47. He remained until it closed. And then he moved to another building where they had an applied science laboratory.

Met husband after was recalled.