

# Object Summary

---



## Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Ed

### Puglisevich

**Date**

4 December 2020

**Primary Maker**

Ed Puglisevich

null

**Dimensions**

39 minutes, 22 seconds

null

**Extent**

1 digital audio recording (WAV)

**Object Type**

Oral history

null

null

**Collection**

Malta Dockyard Oral History project

## **Museum**

Malta Maritime Museum

## **Registration Number**

MMM.AV0005

## **Description**

This recorded interview was made as part of the Malta Dockyard Oral History project by the Digitisation Unit, Heritage Malta, under the direction of Joe Meli. Ed was employed as part of the Admiralty transport section that was located at Kordin, rather than the Dockyard. He started working as a mechanic with the Admiralty in 1952. The transport section was eventually transferred to the Dockyard when Bailey took over from the Admiralty. He eventually emigrated to Canada.

## **Transcript / Summary**

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) (00:30) His experience was not actually in the dockyard, but he worked with the transportation section that was located at Corradino Hill. His work was to provide transport for all the dockyard and repair of the various cars and trucks. He began working with the drydocks in 1952 with the department called SNSO (Senior Naval Stores Officer?) (03:45) He states that they even had a base at Dingli Cliffs, because there was a weather station, so the personnel had to travel back and forth to their station, and they called his foreman's office and provided them with a transport. His department was located at Corradino. (05:00) They had about 50 trucks, lorries and other transportation as required. In addition, they had the light cars which was a regular car and then they had staff cars which was equivalent to a limousine, which were used by higher ups such as Admirals, etc. They also had a special car for when famous people visited Malta. As a result, they had around 50 mechanics and he was one of them. (07:00) When they receive a call for a car, they ask what type of transport they need and then they assign a driver. Sometimes they transported goods, and it could be travelling all day or just one way. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(07:45) He states, that when he

joined, there were still transport equipment from WW2. They had jeeps, and other army vehicles, but by time they were slowly replaced. As a company they had a contract with Bedford which is owned by General Motors, America. The British Ministry sent them to Malta at different times. The whole fleet actually was replaced every five years. Every five years, a big ship used to come in with a lot of stores for the dockyard, because there were all kinds of trades, so they needed a lot of parts and materials. The cars were generally scrapped but sometimes they were sold. (10:00) Even some of the old Malta buses, most of them were the old army trucks, they kept the frame, the engine, and the front part, but the body itself and seats were built in Malta. (12:00) Sometimes there were drivers working in night shifts. But where he was as a mechanic, mainly for repair and maintenance of the vehicles, were all on day shift day, from 07:00 to 15:30 or 16:00. Family and Social Life-Friendships between workers(12:30) They had a big parking area where they played soccer and usually it was always the drivers against the mechanics. He states that everybody liked it, and in fact they used to have an extra break to play. He was one of the youngest so, he usually he always played. In addition, during Christmas time, on the last day of work, they used to work half-a-day, from 7am to 12pm, and a little before they stopped, they cleaned the shop and the work benches, and then they decorate the best way they could. They also brought food from their homes and were even allowed to take liquor. In other words, they celebrated together. (15:30) Ed claims that the dockyard area was massive, so they were not close with other people doing other trades. Everybody celebrated the best way they could, on their own, with their department only. (16:45) Puglisevich mentions that as mechanics they were not in contact with the dockyard workers, however the drivers did meet with other people working at the dockyard. In fact, some of the drivers were from time to time were assigned to a certain department for say, a month-long period. Example: there was the paint shop, sail making, etc, and sometimes these departments required a light truck to stay with them all the time. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(18:15) During a certain period, Ed mentions that civil cars were not allowed at the dockyard, and many workers which came from near towns, used to walk to/from home. Workers who had a car, had to leave it outside the gate. They were not allowed to bring their own vehicles inside, due to security reasons and safety. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the

departure of a vessel)(20:30) He states that many Admirals used to go to his department for transportation. Ed adds that sometimes Admirals used to complain about the service, and if they hear a sound or squeak, they would report right away. Ed saw Lord Mountbatten of Burma many times. He was the Queen' s Uncle. He was a commander in Chief and had a lot of power. The driver was kind of scared of him, and he always wanted his car cleaned, polished and smell nice. (23:00) In 1950s there were no strikes as things were going very smooth. But he then adds that later on, things were getting rough and there was unemployment. The British did not want to lay off people, but they could not keep everybody. In 1557-1558, they got this company from England, Bailey Malta Limited, to take more than half the operation and run it, so as to keep the people working. But the company did not have the necessary experience. So, half of the workers were sent with Bailey. Ed was in fact, transferred from the Admiralty to Bailey, who had his transport workshop at Ghajn Dwieli. Puglisevich states that Bailey was not delivering and then the Government of Malta took over the Dockyard. It was at this period that civilian (Commercial) ships were entering the dockyard of Malta. The government still could not keep all the workers, so in other words there was loss of jobs of all kinds of trades. There was a time where they nearly gave up, and the drydocks was about to close down, but they searched for a European country who could take over the dockyard, and Palumbo did so. (30:45) The government even tried to keep it going but asking the Chinese for help, and in fact, they built one of the biggest docks in Malta. Therefore, they built the Dock and brought in super tankers. Ed claims that the government tried everything to keep the drydock going. (33:30) He remembers when a naval ship moved on the blocks (HMS Wolfe) in the dry dock and there was a person caught between the blocks. Another accident is when a crane operator, passed out and fell down. After, when they were repairing the 'civil boats' , there was an explosion where 9 people were killed. Ed was not present on that day of the explosion, because he had already emigrated in Canada. (37:00) The best time he had was with the Royal Navy, as things were smooth and there were no strikes. Ed did the apprenticeship, and he states that the apprentice of the British was one of the best. At the dockyard the British used to hire around 250 a year. The pay and condition were good.