

Object Summary



Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Alfred

Micallef

Date

26 May 2021

Primary Maker

Alfred Micallef

null

Dimensions

26 minutes 55 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.AV0042

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. Alfred joined the shipyard in 1965 as a shipwright apprentice. After completing his apprenticeship, he became a shipwright liner and 6 years later he became foreman of Shipwrights. After 6 years as foreman, he applied for a post of management trainee and after 1½ years of training, he was transferred to the post of steel shops manager. After 6 years, he moved to the post of deputy purchasing manager and spent around 5 years working there. During his last 10 years he was posted at Manoel Island yacht yard, as purchasing manager, from where he left in 2009 during the closing-down process.

Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) (00:30) He joined as an apprentice in 1965, and was asked to do so by his father, as he previously worked there and even Micallef's brother. He did his exam and placed in 69th position. His dad did not want him to remain as a shipwright but wanted him to advance. His father had a friend, Joe Casaletto who was a liner and whenever he was free, he used to teach Alfred Micallef. He used to jot down notes and take him to meet the draughtsmen. Then after some time an application for liners was issued and he applied and sat for the exam. Alfred passed the exam and became a liner. Before he had tried to become an estimator, but was not successful. So, he became a shipwright liner and was trained by George Mangion. About 5/6 years later he became foreman of Shipwrights. Education-Employment pathways / local and foreign training opportunities(04:00) After six years as foreman of shipwrights, there were vacancies for management trainees. He applied and passed and started as management trainee. He did a training of one year and a half. (05:00) He worked

on the 'Avar' which was a Turkish ship, docked in No.6 Dock. He remembers a worker who died on this ship as he was hit by steel plate. This happened as the worker was leaving the workplace to pick up his wife and new born baby from hospital. (07:00) During the time as ship manager, he remembers receiving a letter at home from the shipyard, telling him that as from Monday, he reports at the Steel workshop. This came to a surprise, but it seems that there was some internal problem and the decision was that Alfred takes over the steel shops. During the same time, he also spent three years at university. He obtained Diploma in Management and Labour studies. Education-Employment pathways / local and foreign training opportunities(08:15) Then after six years a lot of internal problems including management politics, and they wanted to promote someone else in Alfred's position. Tony Sammut who was the Hull Manager and manager of Alfred, encouraged him to go to the purchasing department. He had no other choice and joined as the deputy purchasing manager with Godfrey Borg, and spent around five years working there. (10:30) During his last 10 years he was situated in Manoel Island yacht yard, as purchasing. He then retired and then re-joined Manoel Island for five months to assist them in purchasing. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel) (12:00) He describes in some detail, the work of the liner, which basically acting as a writer to the foreman of shipwrights. He used to collect the details of all the steelwork being carried out on a ship and compare it what was actually contracted before the start of the work. He used to prepare detailed sketches/drawings for the estimator (probably he meant shiprepair accountant), for him to compile the invoice with the actual work done. He used to make all the necessary paperwork for the testing the derricks and the hatches with the surveyor. Micallef explains that the work of the liner was to collect information. Safety-Health and Safety procedures (15:30) He mentions that at first safety was not so good and even the workers were not trained on safety. He mentions his brother John Micallef, who was an electrician, who unfortunately died with asbestos. Alfred's brother was one of the first to go to Denmark to be trained on safety. By time, safety improved and even obtained certificates for following safety measures. (17:30) He recalls his first year. They used to go camping at Gozo. He remembers the training supervisors. At that time Gozo was still quite rural. Family and Social Life-Friendships between workers(21:30) Micallef used to ask and show interest in what he needed to do. In fact, he

states that he used to ask how to do tiles or other work. He adds that the people at the Dockyard became his second family as they even used to go out on weekends together or at weddings. Trade Union-Strikes(24:00) During the seven-month strike he used to paint pictures on the lockers, that were in a very bad condition. He remembers the ablutions were really in a bad condition, rain water used to seep in, and they used to put wooden planks, so as to have a dry floor when they are changing clothes.