

Object Summary



Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Anthony

Farrugia (iz-Zazu)

Date

7 July 2021

Primary Maker

Anthony Farrugia (iz-Zazu)

null

Dimensions

30 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.AV0055

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. Anthony Farrugia (aka Zazu) worked at the yard between 1967 and 2009. He qualified as a boilermaker working on different projects, eventually moving to a different job, working as a recorder. He was promoted as section leader in the Wages department and spent the last three years as Wages Manager retiring in 2009 during the process of yard closing-down.

Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) (00:30) During that time, 1967, there were not a lot of job opportunities, and he decided to join the Dockyard. He began by going to Stella Maris and sit for the exam. He passed and the first time they met with the other apprentices at the canteen. He began by making a lot of friends, and his best friend was and still is Rafel Vella, who ended as a charge man at the boilershop. After a year, everyone had to make a project and his group made a model of a Catamaran, which nowadays is found at the Maritime Museum. (04:00) During the first year they were taught various trades. He never was on keen on electrical work. The apprenticeship was five years, but he did only four years, as he passed the 'City and Guilds' final examination, which meant that they would start with the journeyman's wage a year before. After finishing his apprenticeship, he became a boilermaker. It was a difficult trade, because it entailed doing dangerous work in a confined space. The boilermaker trade was a very versatile trade as they had to learn all lot of different types of work. After working one year as a boilermaker, he moved to the shipbuilding section. (06:45) He started working on the first Chinese ships that were being built in the shipyard. After about 2 years he was moved to Marsa site, where the new shipbuilding

yard was being built, in order to work on the building of the Marsa workshop roofing. Meanwhile when he was working on this big project, a vacancy for a recorder was issued. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(08:45) He then applied for a post of a recorder. As a recorder he used to enter 30 minutes before all workers, to check that all is well, for example to open the stations and to prepare the clocks for the clocking. They worked with the chargemen, who prepared timesheets for all his men. The recorder had to write the works order and job numbers of all workers. For example, his number was 167454, they would record the Works order number and the job number of worked hours by each worker. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(10:15) Every 15 days, on a Friday, the recorders stayed overtime to work on reconciliation of the time sheets with the worker' s punch card. This used to go to the main office, and two recorders used to check and verify that the hours on the time sheets in relation to each individual' s clock card. The clock card after checking were then sent to the wages for the calculation of the workers' wages. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(12:00) By time, around 2004/2005 they introduced palm reading. This of course brought to an end the clock card system, as it was now the computer job to take record of the time. The palm reader system was supplied by AIS, Belgium. At that time, he was a section leader, and together with a Belgian company representative, they had to install and set the new system. This was a complicated system as there were a lot of different rates and times. He eventually became a section leader and his manager was Alfred Mifsud, who supported him a lot with his knowledge. (15:45) His last three years working at the Dockyard, he became a wages manager. In 2009, he was 58, and he thanked God that this was an opportunity he could not neglect. (18:15) His experience as a recorder gave him the opportunity to be close to various workers. He mentions that there was a variety of workers, some were honest while others were not helpful. Some workers would be there at 06:30am, waiting behind the door, until the security guard opens the gate. Others arrived exactly on time. There were various recording stations all over the yard. The number of recorders at each station depended on the number of workers using it. Entering the dockyard-Trades (From approval to the departure of a vessel)(21:30) At first, the workers were paid in cash in a small envelope. So, the recorder had a small wooden case, and they used to get the

envelopes and before taking the case the recorder had to make sure with the Wages clerk that all envelopes with the correct money were in the case. Once the recorder signed the acceptance, then the case and its contents became his responsibility. (22:30) He mentions that once he was paying the riggers at the station between No.4 and 5 docks. The workers would come to a sort of teller window and the worker presented his clock card and the recorder his wage envelope. The envelope case was in a partition between the envelopes. That day a chargeman of the riggers gave him his clock card, but Farrugia could not find it, and this was very worrying. Luckily, he found it, and he was really relieved. (25:00) He said that the best way of paying was when it came directly through a bank transfer. This reduced a lot of responsibility and risk of handling cash money. (25:15) With the post of Wages Manager, his responsibility increased. This was because, he had to compute the total of all wages, which used to be a substantial number. This total was distributed from different banks. Obviously, he and the Head of Accounts had to make sure that they had to money in place for all the wages. Family and Social Life-Friendships between workers(27:30) Farrugia was always a fan of sports, in fact he played football with Msida and Floriana. He also joined the Dockyard team. He states that the Dockyard organised several sports event. They had the sport and social club. During the older times there was the league between departments, and used to play at the Schreiber ground. He remembers quite a lot of apprentices that entered in 1967. (28:30 He is very sad about the closure of the yard. The perception of the shipyard workers was that of lazy people doing nothing. This was a wrong perception.