

Object Summary



Oral history of the Malta Dockyard: Anna

Fenech

Date

30 November 2021

Primary Maker

Anna Fenech

null

Dimensions

26 minutes, 54 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.AV0097

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. During her 10 years yard employment (1978-1988), Anna Fenech (Azzopardi) worked first as a typist and data entry operator. She was allocated to work as secretary to a foreign consultant with the newbuilding section. She resigned for family reasons whilst working as secretary to the Purchasing and Stores manager.

Transcript / Summary

(This summary is a work in progress. Timings are approximate.) Entering the dockyard-Reasons for joining (00:30) Anna starts by mentioning that most of her family members, including, father, brother, uncles, etc all worked at the drydocks. Late 1977, the drydocks issued an advert for applications for clerk typists, so she applied. She took her own typewriter with her for the typing test, which was at the No.1 dock area, in the building presently occupied by the University. She was successful in her test and was called in for an interview with the Personnel Manager Mr Karmenu Debono. She has an idea that there were about 18 girls that passed, and joined the drydocks in 1978. Education-Interesting training and skills (02:15) With another three female clerk typists, she was allocated to the data processing department. Her first manager was Mr Busuttil. She describes that the computers were big and similar to a piano. She had a training period, to get to know what her job was and how to use the equipment. Anna states that her work consisted in typing numbers only. The typed numbers were converted by the machine into punched cards containing the information. She perceived her job as monotonous. (03:30) So time later she asked for a transfer, and the personnel offered her a job as secretary with Mr. Sheth who was a consultant from the

Commonwealth fund for technical cooperation, with the New Building section, which was situated in No. 1 Dock area. Next to her office there was the planning office managed by Jimmy Caruana. There were also the project managers of the new building section. There was also an office for the client's representatives. Her work was mainly with Mr Sheth. Education-Interesting training and skills (06:15) Since her office was away from the main office of the yard. She had her difficulties to make reports, etc. She had a typewriter that was primitive (even for that time), and she used to type on what was called a stencil. Then she used to send the messenger with the stencil to the main office for printing the required copies. The copies were returned to her where she used to staple them in reports and address them to the receiver as per the distribution listed. The messenger would then take them back to the main office for distribution. (07:45) She was isolated. She was the only female in that area, even punching in and out of the shipyard. When it was pay day, she used to go to get her wage from the main office. This was in cash and in a small brown envelope. Although she was isolated, she felt more part of the actual shipyard, because she was working with the production management, and she had a view on the No.1 dock, where work was going on continuously. (09:00) At that time they were building ships for the Chinese. In fact, she made friends with the Chinese translator. Another work was of the SBM buoys. Education-Employment pathways / local and foreign training opportunities (10:00) She was with Mr. Sheth as a private secretary, but then there were welding tests going on and Anna used to type in their results and any other work that was required. In 1981, there were some problems in the shipyard around the Mnarja holiday. And at that time, she was transferred with the purchasing manager, Mr. Fenech. For her it was a completely new environment. She began to work with an electric typewriter. Furthermore, there was a photocopier. She recalls that the purchasing department was divided into sections; the storehouse stock, local purchase, shipping section, and a section, with two clerks, for shiprepair direct orders. There was also the telex room, which was connected to the main office. (13:15) At the purchasing department, there was a lot of work, as drawing office personnel were always coming with orders, using a form called M2008, which included all technical information. the name of the supplier, etc. and the purchasing used to go out with enquiries. (15:15) They also had the local purchase section, that was also very busy, but yet, she enjoyed it. They had a lot of orders so many

suppliers used to visit the place. There was a purchasing committee, that met once a month or more frequent in certain cases. Education-Interesting training and skills (17:15) At first, she was a clerk typist, then a short hand typist, and finally a secretary. When she was working with Mr. Sheth, she used her shorthand continuously. The Pitman shorthand, consisted of lines and strokes for the substituted words and parts of words. The shorthand typist would then type the final document from her shorthand notes. Technical words created some difficulties, but in general she got used to it. (20:45) Anna was happy doing her work, and states that Mr. Fenech was a good manager who was easy going. Vinnie Zahra, used to take care of the things on the new building. At the local purchase section, there was Pawlu Cilia. Guido Ebejer handled the store-house stock, and was also the Christmas party organiser. At the shipping area, she remembers Salvu Galea, Tony Busuttil and Miller. (24:40) She left because she was pregnant with her first born, and took her pregnancy leave and after 1 month she returned back to work. However, when she was pregnant with her second child, she left on a definite basis.