

Overcoming Barriers:
Black Women at Boeing

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Abstract

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This research looks at the lives of Black Women in the Pacific Northwest working at Boeing during World War II. Using historical research, archived records and oral history the experiences of Black Women Rosies are documented. Oral histories from Katie Burks and Ruth Render two of the first Black Women employed at Boeing during World War II offer personal insights into barriers Black Women faced and how they overcame these obstacles with activism to build strong communities and a better workplace.

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INTRODUCTION

As a graduate student, labor educator and organizer I have always had an academic interest in gender, race and class. My interest drives my research. Working in the labor movement, one argument repeatedly made regards the increasingly significant role women play in the workforce.¹ My research focuses on the labor of Black women in the Pacific Northwest who worked for Boeing between 1940-1970. Very little research has been done on Black women in labor in the Pacific Northwest and even less on Black women at Boeing. Historian Glenda Riley argues that Black women experienced the west differently from other women² due in part because Black women had to work to help support their families. Black women seeking work in the Pacific Northwest played a significant role in building Black communities in Seattle. Historian Quintard Taylor has done pioneering research on race relations in the Pacific Northwest but we have few details on Black women and work. The research and oral histories of Black women employed at Boeing during and after World War II can fill the gap and lead to further research on Black women's activism and experiences in the labor movement in the Northwest. This research documents the experiences of some of the women employed by Boeing during the war.

METHODOLOGY: Oral History

The lived experiences of Black women working at Boeing will give personal accounts of how Black women in the Northwest experienced and overcame resistance to their roles in the

¹ Kate Bronfenbrenner, "Organizing women: The Nature and Process of Union-Organizing Efforts Among U.S. Women Workers Since the mid-1990s," *Work & Occupations*, 32(4), 441-463 (2005): 459.

² Quintard Taylor, ed., *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 24.

workforce and the labor movement. To accomplish this, the qualitative research method is applied. Using the qualitative research method allowed the research to take on a wide range of approaches to gain insight and knowledge. In *Black Workers Remember*, oral histories are used to blend history with historical research to showcase the lives of Black workers in Memphis, Tennessee during the era of industrial unionism and Jim Crow segregation.³ History as a discipline includes the people, events, and movements of human civilizations past and present.⁴ The oral histories told by Black workers provided detailed accounts of their lives while working in the Jim Crow south and shows how these workers used unionization of their workplace to gain freedom and equality at work and economic stability within their community. This study provides a model of how to use oral interviews to create history.

Similarly, this study provides detailed stories given by Boeing workers and uses supportive historical research to develop the stories told by each woman. The recording of these personal stories provides the reader with Black women's personal accounts of a period in which Blacks seemed invisible to many. In instances where workers could not recall the complete details of an event, historical research and documents validate their stories and give their oral histories accuracy. Historical research and oral storytelling are blended so that the reader can have a greater understanding of both unions and Black history in the Pacific Northwest.

To accomplish this, questions were developed and interviews were conducted on the phone and in person of workers from Boeing. The International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751 Education committee provided copies of previous interviews as well as

³ Michael Honey, *Black Workers Remember An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1999), 1-13.

⁴Allen F. Repko et. al., *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 7.

contact information for retired Black women employed by Boeing during World War II. With this information I began my research. One question offered by historian Quintard Taylor asks, “does the West represent the last best hope for nineteenth- and twentieth-century African Americans?”⁵ The experiences of women at Boeing offer one example of Black hope in the West during the twentieth century.

In order to analyze the role of Black women in the West it is important to discuss the significance of women’s participation in unions and how that participation strengthened and built the labor movement. The role of the labor movement is important when looking at Black women workers in the Pacific Northwest because of the history of labor in the region.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST LABOR

Black migration from the South brought Blacks in search of work West and to the Pacific Northwest. There are many factors that contributed to the massive migration of Blacks to the Northwest. Some of these factors include increased economic opportunity for Blacks in the Northwest and a desire to escape the racist Jim Crow South.

The first Black community in the Pacific Northwest evolved from Portland, Oregon in 1860.⁶ This community consisted of Black artisans and unskilled laborers who settled in the Northwest. As Blacks migrated to the Northwest the racial prejudice from the South followed. Historian Sherman Savage suggests that drastic exclusionary laws were passed because whites in the Northwest saw free Blacks as dangerous to their peace and happiness. Fearful that free Blacks and slaves brought labor competition, laws there passed banning new Blacks from entering the state. The law stated:

⁵ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990*. (New York: Norton 1998), 17

⁶ Quintard Taylor, “The Emergence of Black Communities in the Pacific Northwest: 1865-1910,” *The Journal of Negro History*, 64(4) (1979), 342.

That if any such free Negro or mulatto shall fail to quit and leave the state as required by the act to which this is amendatory, he or she may be arrested upon a warrant issued by some justice of the peace, and if guilty upon trial before such justice, the said justice shall issue his orders to any competent officer to execute the process directing said officer to give ten days public notice, by at least four written or printed advertisements, he shall have power to publicly hire out such free Negro or mulatto to the lowest bidder, on a day and at the place mentioned in said notice. Such officer shall expose such free Negro or mulatto to public hiring; and the person who will obligate himself to remove such free Negro or mulatto from the country for the shortest term of service, shall enter into a bond with good and sufficient security to Oregon, in a penalty of at least one thousand dollars, binding himself to remove said Negro or mulatto out of the country within six months after such service expires, which bond shall be filed in the clerk's office in the proper county; and upon failure to perform the conditions of said bond. The prosecuting attorney for Oregon shall commence a suit, upon a certified copy of such bond, in the circuit court against such a de-linquent and his sureties.⁷

This specific law was passed in 1844. Although these provisions did not apply to the few Blacks already living in the Northwest they had some success in keeping new Blacks from the Pacific Northwest.⁸

Nonetheless, by 1910 Black communities had emerged in most cities in the Pacific Northwest. Blacks were building vibrant communities in Portland, Spokane, Yakima, Tacoma, and Seattle. Over the next twenty years the Black population in the in the Northwest more than tripled, including communities across the border growing in Montana. Helena, Montana the

⁷ W. Sherman Savage, "The Negro in the History of the Pacific Northwest," *The Journal of Negro History*, 13(3) (1928), 255-264.

⁸ W. Sherman Savage, "The Negro in the History of the Pacific Northwest," *The Journal of Negro History*, 13(3) (1928), 258.

home of the second oldest Black community in the Pacific Northwest.⁹ The Black population in the Pacific Northwest increased to 3,000 based on jobs created from gold mining.¹⁰

In all these communities Black population growth was linked to the success of the city -, meaning the more jobs and opportunities available for Blacks, the stronger the community. Job opportunities in domestic service as well as unskilled and skilled labor jobs allowed the Black community to grow. As Black communities in the Northwest grew, newspapers, schools, churches and various social organizations were established that and these institutions connected Blacks both within and beyond city boundaries.¹¹ As cities grew new business were established creating more job opportunities for Black residents of the Northwest. One company founded in the Northwest during this period included the Boeing Airplane Company.

THE HISTORY OF BOEING

William Boeing founded the Boeing Airplane Company in 1917 in Seattle, Washington. It opened with just over twenty employees that ranged from pilots to seamstresses. Later in that year the United States entered into World War I (WWI). During WWI Boeing gained a military contract that allowed the company to increase employment and production capacity. The end of WWI resulted in a decreased demand for airplanes resulting in many businesses failing and going under. Boeing survived this period by expanding its production of furniture and boats.

During WWI the Black population of Seattle grew immensely. By 1920, almost 6,000 Black women lived in the Pacific Northwest. Forty percent of this population lived in Seattle and Portland. Results from a 1935 study conducted by the Seattle Urban League found that

⁹ Quintard Taylor, "The Emergence of Black Communities in the Pacific Northwest: 1865-1910," *The Journal of Negro History*, 64(4) (1979), 342-354.

¹⁰ Robert B. Pitts "Organized Labor and The Negro in Seattle" (Masters Thesis, University of Washington 1941).

¹¹ Quintard Taylor, "The Emergence of Black Communities in the Pacific Northwest: 1865-1910," *The Journal of Negro History*, 64(4) (1979), 342-354.

forty-three percent of Blacks in Seattle had migrated from the South, while only 25 percent of Blacks in Seattle had been born in Washington and only 19 percent had been born in Seattle.¹² During this period of growth Blacks were successful in gaining employment in civil service and the Navy Yards.

In 1935 the International Association of Machinist established its first branch, Local 751, at Boeing, with thirty-five founding members. IAM local 751 signed the first collective bargaining agreement with Boeing in 1936, establishing IAM as the official bargaining agent for the workers at Boeing. By 1939, Boeing employed 4,000 workers making military planes for the Army Air Corps. By 1940 Boeing employed over 8,000 workers and continued to grow due to the United States entering into World War II (WWII) in 1941.

During WWII Seattle's Black population grew as more Blacks migrated Northwest in search of jobs in the defense industry. Wartime industries grew quickly, resulting in a need for more workers. During the war Seattle's shipbuilding and aircraft industries experienced growth. At the start of 1941, the Boeing workforce had 10,000 workers but by the end of the year when the U.S officially entered into WWII Boeing had a workforce of 30,000. At the peak of wartime, Boeing employed nearly 50,000 workers.¹³ Boeing recruited unskilled and semi-skilled Black laborers from throughout the South. One of them was Katie Burks. Records indicate 45,000 Black workers migrated to the Northwest during WWII.¹⁴

¹² Pitts, Robert B, "Organized Labor and The Negro in Seattle" (Masters Thesis, University of Washington 1941).

¹³ Robert Weaver, "Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 59(4) (1945), 597-625.

¹⁴ Quintard Taylor, "Swing the Door Wide: World War II Wrought a Profound Transformation in Seattle's Black Community," *Columbia The Magazine of Northwest History*, 9(2) (1995), 26-32.

The migration of Blacks to Seattle in the 1940s represented a profound change that made the city increasingly similar to the rest of urban America where Black migrants typically settled. Black migration permanently altered race relations in Seattle, as newcomers demanded the social freedoms and political rights denied them in the South.¹⁵ The growth of Boeing during WW II had brought about many changes for Black women workers. Although Boeing grew, Black Seattleites at first did not benefit from Boeing expansion and Blacks expressed their grievances with the lack of opportunities in the aircraft industry.¹⁶ Boeing management and the IAM had a history of racial exclusion. Boeing's contract with IAM prevented the hiring of Blacks.¹⁷ In a June 28, 1940 article titled "Do We Bar Negroes?", responding to critics of the union ban of Blacks the author writes:

...It is true that the Boeing Company does not hire Negroes. But since when has Local 751 had any control over the company's policy in this connection? It is also true that a clause exists in the constitution of the International Association of Machinists barring Negroes from membership.¹⁸

Historically, not only in Seattle but everywhere IAM had excluded Blacks from membership. Although Boeing had not hired Blacks, Boeing blamed its lack of diversity on IAM. This unspoken policy lasted for years until pressure from the federal government as well as a need for workers forced Boeing to open its doors to Black workers. During the war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 banning discrimination forced opened Boeing's door. Black community and civil rights organizations to pressure Boeing and IAM to end their policy

¹⁵ Quintard Taylor, "The Civil Rights Movement in the American West: Black Protest in Seattle, 1960-1970," *The Journal of Negro History*, 80(1) (1995), 1-14.

¹⁶ Robert C. Weaver, "Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 59 (1945): 598.

¹⁷ Robert C. Weaver, "Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 59 (1945): 598.

¹⁸ "Do We Bar Negroes?," *The Aero Mechanic* 28 Jun. 1940: 8 (See Appendix)

of racial exclusion. During the war memberships to both Seattle's Urban League and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) grew significantly.

Organizations working to advance the rights and privileges of Blacks assisted by applying pressure on both Boeing and the Machinist Union to hire Black workers. In addition, Local 751 had excluded Blacks from union membership and were against Black workers being hired at Boeing, fearing that it created competition for white union members. By the end of the war Boeing was one of the largest employers in the Northwest.

BLACK WOMEN AT BOEING

Pressure from the government and a growing labor shortage forced Boeing and the union to allow the first white women in 1941 and then Black production workers in the Seattle plant in the spring of 1942. In response to pressure from the Fair Employment Practices Committee and the American Federation of Labor Boeing lifted the ban on Black union members in 1942.¹⁹ Interestingly, the first two workers hired at Boeing were Black women. Stenographer Florise Spearman joined Boeing as an office worker in January 1942 and four months later Dorothy West Williams joined Boeing as a sheet metal worker.²⁰ Williams became the first Black production worker and first Black member of Local 751. These two women opened the doors for future Black women at Boeing. Interestingly, upon hiring Blacks, women constituted 86 percent of the 329 Blacks employed by Boeing in 1943. Historian Polly Myers writes:

Generally speaking the defense industry hired more black men than black women. The aircraft industry however, was more willing to hire African American women than African American men...The scholar Chitose Sato suggests that both employers

¹⁹ Polly Reed Myers, "Boeing Aircraft Company's Manpower Campaign during World War II," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 98(2007): 187.

²⁰ Quintard Taylor, "Swing the Door Wide: World War II Wrought a Profound Transformation in Seattle's Black Community," *Columbia The Magazine of Northwest History*, 9(2) (1995), 26-32.

and white male employees viewed all women as temporary workers and so aircraft manufacturers were more willing to hire African American women than African American men. In addition, employers considered African American women less threatening to the established workplace hierarchy.²¹

KATIE BURKS RECALLS COMING TO THE NORTHWEST AND WORKING AT BOEING

I came to Seattle in 1943 from Birmingham, Alabama to work for Boeing. I was a teenager and I had just finished high school. While working in Birmingham at an airplane plant we heard there were similar jobs available in Seattle but you needed to have at least fifty dollars to go. I didn't have the money but I begged my daddy to give it to me. It was tough but eventually he gave in. I was supposed to go to Tuskegee for nursing school but I kept at him. There were six of us total that arrived in Seattle by train. It took six days to get to Seattle because we took the longest route possible so that we could have an adventure.

When I arrived in Seattle I was taken to a dormitory in Georgetown that was guarded by soldiers. The Black women stayed on one side and the White women stayed on the other. We did not leave without a chaperone. Curfew was enforced and failure to abide by the rules meant being sent back home. Once we received our training we went to work at the Boeing plant.

When I first started at Boeing I had to join the union. As a member of the Machinist I paid three dollars a month in dues that I delivered to the union hall in Georgetown each month. At the time we were paying three dollars for our work permits but the whites were paying a dollar and a half. We were complaining and then they stopped us from paying anything. Well the White workers got mad because we was working and getting the same benefits they were

²¹ Polly Reed Myers, "Boeing Aircraft Company's Manpower Campaign during World War II," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 98(2007): 187.

paying a dollar and a half for while we weren't paying anything. Eventually we all paid the same rate.

During the war everything was rationed. You would have to get a stamp from Boeing and take it downtown so you could get a pair of steel toe shoes. There were some ladies that worked there that would buy extra stamps. Butter, sugar and nylon was rationed so you needed a stamp. There was a lady from Germany whose boyfriend was killed in the war she would give me her stamps and tell me about when she grew up in Germany. There was another guy that worked that they called "Black Market Benny" because he would buy candy and if you did his work you could get some. Everything was limited during the war. The stamps were free but you needed to wait in line to use them. If you see a long line you would jump in the line not knowing what was being given out. I waited in a line for about two hours to get cigarettes and I don't even smoke. You never new what was going to be given but when there was a line you get in it.

At the time, Seattle was segregated. I didn't go downtown often because I worked such long days but the elevators and the sanitation workers were white. They gradually hired Blacks but at the time you could go stay downtown all day and the only Black you see was yourself.

I worked at Boeing as a mechanic for forty-three years, when I finally retired I was a lead mechanic. My workdays ranged from ten to twelve hours a day. My starting wage at Boeing was sixty-two cents. At the time these were decent wages especially considering the men both Black and White did not want us there.

FEMALE LABOR & RACE IN AMERICAN LABOR

Burks gives one example of how racial division applied in unions during the war. The colored affiliate locals are another example of racial division in labor, established because Blacks threatened the economic gains of white unions. O'Brien & Brooks have suggested that any

solution to the problems of races living together intelligently in Oregon and Washington awaited the formation of statewide citizen's committees on minority rights and civic unity."²² These groups already existing during this period had continued to organize as membership grew.

During World War II, Blacks obtained temporary work permits to gain employment in various unionized jobs but they were typically denied union membership. During the war nearly two thousand Blacks worked in the shipyards of Seattle, Kirkland and Winslow. These industries and the growing labor input of the Black population brought many benefits to Seattle.

In 1944 a progressive coalition including the Urban League, NAACP, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Negro Republican Club and several progressive labor unions lobbied the state for a fair employment practice law. Although unsuccessful and opposed by the Washington Federation of Labor, continued persistence by progressive groups allowed the passage of the Fair Employment Practices Act in 1949. Black men and women were both denied equal access to unions within the American Federation of Labor (AFL). During this period AFL unions were divided based on craft and gender. Non-whites were not allowed into the unions, resulting in Black women denied membership to the female AFL locals. Segregated, separate affiliate locals were established and recognized by white unions but they were unequal.²³ The colored affiliate locals were established because they threatened the economic gains of white unions.

Historians have shown that Black women during slavery were the backbone of white households in the South, washing, cleaning, cooking and caring for the young and sick. In the early years of America slaveholders used Black women freely to maintain the households of

²² Robert O'Brien, Lee Brooks, "Race relations in the Pacific Northwest," *Phylon* (1940-1956), 7(1), (1946), 21.

²³ Dana Frank, "Race Relations and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1915-1929," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 86(1) (1994), 35-44.

slaveholders in addition to laboring in the fields.²⁴ Although Black women lacked professional education and training, they utilized many skills in providing care for those in need. This tradition of Black women as the backbone of the white household continued long after slavery.²⁵ Although emancipation brought slaves their freedom, it also forced Black women into unskilled work with little pay.²⁶ Black women worked as farm laborers and domestic servants, spending long hours caring for white families to earn wages that were insufficient to support their own families. As more and more Blacks migrated to urban areas, Black women came to dominate domestic work. As Blacks left the South, they went North and West in search of opportunity. Alice Kessler Harris, one of the pioneering women's historians since the 1960's, tells us:

Women have always worked-in their homes and the homes of others, in fields, factories, shops, stores, and offices. The kind of work done has varied for women of different classes, races, ethnic groups, and geographic locations. And the nature of women's work has changed over time with urbanization and industrialization. What remains the same is that the ways in which women have worked involved a constant tension between two areas of women's lives: the home and the marketplace.²⁷

Black women faced racial discrimination and social inequality in the workplace, mostly consigned to poorly paid, marginal jobs. Black women workers formed mutual support networks from the earliest period to ease their plight, in keeping with traditional African survival strategies.²⁸ These organizations similar to unions acted as representatives for Black workers

²⁴ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985).

²⁵ Kessler-Harris, Alice, *Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview*, (New York: Hofstra 1981), 10.

²⁶ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985).

²⁷ Kessler-Harris, Alice, *Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview*, (New York: Hofstra 1981), 10.

²⁸ Bruce Fehn, "African-American Women and the Struggle for Equality in the Meatpacking Industry," *Journal of Women's History*, 10(1) (1998), 45.

with the purpose of improving working conditions. Ruth Render is one worker who to used her network of friends to gain work after being laid off by Boeing because of a medical restriction.

RUTH RENDER'S SURVIVAL AT BOEING

I was injured working at the Boeing plant in Renton as a riveter. I was working the riveting machine and didn't know there was no one on the back panel. My arm was jammed and I was injured. I went to the Equal Opportunity Commission to report the incident the man who took my report denied my story. It was a shame that a man put in his position would treat his own people like that.

Fortunately I had a friend in electronics that helped me get a job at the Everett Plant. However, the Everett Plant was much more racist, they were extremely prejudiced. People worked long hours and often did not receive credit for their work. They would go to the union to report it but at that time it was the company's union not the workers' union. That's just how things worked in those days.

BLACKS AND WOMEN IN THE WEST

Unlike Asian American, Chicano, or much of Native American histories, which are perceived as relating to the Western United States, Black history in the Pacific Northwest continues to be viewed by western regional historians and historians of Black history as an interesting footnote to a story focused elsewhere.²⁹ However, according to historians Moore and Taylor, Black women in the West have played especially critical and varied roles in the region's development, from the earliest days of Spanish exploration and settlement to the social and

²⁹ Quintard Taylor, ed., *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 5.

political battlefields of the twentieth-century.³⁰ For all that has been written on the Black West, we still know little about large areas of the African American past in this region.³¹ The historical accounts of Black women at Boeing during World War II offer valuable insights into an industry dominated by men, as well as an untold history of Black women in the Pacific Northwest.

In contrast to most areas in the United States where Blacks are the dominant minority racial group, the Pacific Northwest states of Oregon and Washington have always had small Black populations.³² Less than 3,000 Blacks, which equated to one percent of the population, lived in Seattle in 1920.³³ Most of the Blacks living in Seattle worked in the service sector -- the men as janitors, waiters, servants, porters and laborers, and the women as domestics and laundresses.³⁴ These labor roles for Blacks lasted until the start of World War II.

Historically, women and workers of color have been excluded and ostracized from the labor movement.³⁵ In part because many viewed labor as all white and all male. For example, the American Federation of Labor saw working women as "...an insidious assault upon the home; it is the knife of the assassin, aimed at the family circle...It debars the man through financial embarrassment from family responsibility, and physically, mentally and socially

³⁰ Quintard Taylor, ed., *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 16.

³¹ Quintard Taylor, ed., *African American Women Confront the West: 1600-2000*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 23.

³² Robert O'Brien, Lee Brooks, "Race relations in the Pacific Northwest," *Phylon* (1940-1956), 7(1), (1946), 21.

³³ Dana Frank, "Race Relations and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1915-1929," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 86(1) (1994), 35-44.

³⁴ Dana Frank, "Race Relations and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1915-1929," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 86(1) (1994), 35-44.

³⁵ Eileen Boris, Annelise Orleck, "Feminism and the Labor Movement: A Century of Collaboration and Conflict," *New Labor Forum* (Murphy Institute), 20(1) (2011), 33-41.

excludes the woman equally from nature's dearest impulse."³⁶ In other words, women belonged at home tending to family responsibilities and not at work. Jacqueline Jones agrees this may have been true for many white women but this rule did not apply to Black women. For women of the two races, poverty and prosperity inspired separate strategies for change and, at least during the third quarter of the twentieth century, created histories that were separate and unequal.³⁷

Before 1968, there was very little research on women's labor history, but the concern of feminists and the New Left for issues of class, gender, and work inspired the growth of the field of women's labor history.³⁸ Early research on women's labor history focused mostly on white women, but Ruth Milkman documented that, war work helped to improve the labor market situation of working class Black and White women. However, Black women still had far more success in service and unskilled blue-collar jobs than they did in clerical and sales positions and forty percent of Black women also remained in domestic service up until the 1950s.³⁹ In Seattle, nonetheless, Blacks accumulated resources from wartime industries resulting in an increased formation of social groups and women's organizations. Meanwhile, nationwide Black union membership increased from 200,00 in 1940 to 1.25 million five years later.⁴⁰ After the war, Blacks would continue to participate and join what would become the civil rights movement for economic and social equality.

³⁶ Eileen Boris, Nelson Lichtenstein, ed., *Major Problems in the History of American Workers*, (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 2003), 209.

³⁷ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985), 235.

³⁸ Lois Helmbold, Rita & Schofield, "Women's labor history, 1790-1945," *Reviews in American History*, 17(4) (1989), 501-518.

³⁹ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985).

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985), 236.

Blacks would especially gain employment in industries with high union density. Although most of the labor movement resisted integration, Blacks still viewed the labor movement as the best opportunity for gaining economic equality. Although employers typically hired either white women or Black men first, depending upon the industry, Black women's persistence paid off.⁴¹ This change in workforce composition had a big effect on unions, during the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of feminism and the freedom movement.⁴² In 1974, thirty-five thousand union women gathered for the founding convention of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) to make changes to the traditionally white male union leadership of the labor movement.⁴³ CLUW activists Mayra Wolfgang, a member of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union (HERE), exclaimed at the convention, "We have a message for George Meany....you can tell them we didn't come to Chicago to swap recipes".⁴⁴ Wolfgang and the other women at the convention were referring to the White male leadership of the AFL-CIO. These women were unionists but also feminists, who sought to make changes and advances for women in the workplace.⁴⁵ This period of activism by feminist trade unionists led female representation in labor leadership to grow significantly,⁴⁶ and female leadership injected women's issues into labor's agenda. Labor Feminists insisted that prioritizing women's issues made labor unions

⁴¹ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985), Jones, 238.

⁴² Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work & Protest a Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, (New York: Routledge 1985), 300-318.

⁴³ Eileen Boris, Annelise Orleck, "Feminism and the Labor Movement: A Century of Collaboration and Conflict," *New Labor Forum (Murphy Institute)*, 20(1) (2011), 33-41.

⁴⁴ Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work & Protest a Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, (New York: Routledge 1985), 300-318.

⁴⁵ Eileen Boris, Annelise Orleck, "Feminism and the Labor Movement: A Century of Collaboration and Conflict," *New Labor Forum (Murphy Institute)*, 20(1) (2011), 33-41.

⁴⁶ Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work & Protest a Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, (New York: Routledge 1985), 300-318.

effective. Katie Burks activism within her union allowed her to be a leader within her union for nearly forty years.

KATIE BURKS ON STRIKE

The first strike I didn't do much because we didn't get unemployment. My sister and I lived together because we weren't married. There were four of us living in a two bedroom so we just took turns paying the rent and buying food. But the second time we stayed out a long time. The first time I walked the picket line it was rainy and cold and I got a cold. The next time I walked the line I worked in the union office.

I was a union member at Boeing for about 40 years. I'm now a lifetime-retired member and I am on the retiree committee. I don't pay dues or anything but I can vote and they send me the union paper.

CONCLUSION

Black labor was used for the hardest and dirtiest work and was segregated in the workplace, but women also responded to these challenges by building workplace and community solidarity. The purpose of a union is to unite workers who would not otherwise have the means or resources to make improvements in their workplace. Boeing management was forced to develop a plan due to pressure from the government, community and labor allies, and Black women benefited. Black women in Seattle were able to gain employment at Boeing even though they faced significant race and gender discrimination.

Ruth Render and Katie Burks are two women who gained employment at Boeing after Spearman and Williams. Ruth Render arrived in Seattle from Ashdown, Arkansas. Render's family migrated to the Northwest in search of work and opportunities that the Jim Crow south denied to Blacks. At 20, Render joined her sister and brother-in-law working at Boeing.

Blacks came to Seattle largely from the South from places such as Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Missouri.⁴⁷ Katie Burks became one of the many Blacks to arrive in the Pacific Northwest from the South. At Boeing, Burks experienced World War II, two strikes and discrimination from Boeing and her union. These experiences challenged Katie and strengthened her activism.

The collectivist approach taken by unions can benefit communities and workers like Burks and Render. However, when it came to protecting the rights of white women and Black workers, labor unions had a mixed record.⁴⁸ Overall the experiences were different for Black women in comparison to white women. One argument made attributes the different experiences between Black and white women workers to the fact that Black husbands brought in less income than white husbands, regardless of work, due to discrimination. This argument offers great insights when looking back at Black women labor force participation.⁴⁹ Although Black women lacked the professional education and training their skills were still utilized in providing for those in need. This trend continued into the 20th century with women like Render and Burks joining the war efforts to improve their lives and also to fill the wartime need for laborers.

Black women in the West have played critical and varied roles in the Northwest's development. Boeing during wartime illustrates clearly that when economic necessity and governmental pressure require the introduction of Blacks into new types of work, change can be

⁴⁷Quintard Taylor, "Swing the Door Wide: World War II Wrought a Profound Transformation in Seattle's Black Community," *Columbia The Magazine of Northwest History*, 9(2) (1995), 26-32.

⁴⁸Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books 1985), 240.

⁴⁹ Claudia Goldin, *Female Labor Force Participation: The Origin of Black and White Differences, 1870 and 1880*. *The Journal of Economic History*, 37 (1), 87-108.

achieved.⁵⁰ Black Seattle achieved change through Black organizing and the results were inclusion into unions, stronger communities and improved lives for Blacks in the Northwest. The oral histories of the Black women that migrated West show the obstacles these women overcame in Seattle during the war through activism that allowed them to maintain gainful employment during and after the War.

⁵⁰ Robert Weaver, "Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 59(4) (1945), 597-625.

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APPENDIX



Photo taken of Katie Burks

Katie Burks

CC: Hi, this is Cheryl Coney and it is February 28th at 2:05 p.m. and I am interviewing Katie Burks. What is your name?

KB: Katie Rebecca Burks.

CC: Can you spell out your first and last name for me?

KB: K-A-T-I-E, that's Katie. Rebecca, R-E-B-E-C-C-A. Burks, B-U-R-K-S.

CC: And how old are you?

KB: Yeah, how old am I? 80, 87.

CC: And when and where were you born?

KB: Birmingham, Alabama.

CC: What year?

KB: 1925.

CC: And how long have you lived in the Pacific Northwest?

KB: I came here in 1943.

CC: And what brought you to the Pacific Northwest?

KB: Well, we was lookin' for something exciting to do and we was working on an airplane in Birmingham and so we heard they was wanting some peoples in Seattle, so six of us came out here.

CC: So tell me about your family background? Do you have any brothers or sisters?

KB: Yes, well I have a sister that passed away in May. I have a brother that has passed away in Birmingham and my mom, my dad. My younger sister, she's here, my older sister, she's here and my brother is here and I'm here.

CC: And what did your brothers and sisters do?

KB: All of us retired. My sister worked at the University of Washington, one worked at the Board of Education, my brother worked for the Park Department and I worked at Boeing.

CC: And how about your parents?

KB: My mother was a stay-home mom. My dad was a salesman.

CC: And were they born in Birmingham?

KB: Yes.

CC: And your grandparents?

KB: My grandparents? I don't know too much about my grandparents, I know my foster grandparents, but they were dead before I was born. I'm named after my mom's mom and after my dad's mom.

CC: Do you remember growing up in Birmingham?

KB: Yes.

CC: Were you involved with the civil rights movement? Do you remember any of that?

KB: No, that happened after I left.

CC: Was anybody in your family involved?

KB: No, they was not involved, cus' my brothers, they were in the service I think and they were, my sister was teaching school at the time and so was my cousin, and so they were not involved. If you live in a place you're involved to a certain extent, but they weren't actually involved.

CC: What do you mean to a certain extent?

KB: Well, they didn't go out demonstrating and they didn't go out marching.

CC: But they supported it?

KB: Oh sure, so did us up here in Washington. We supported it, Mhm.

CC: You mentioned six of you came to the northwest?

KB: Yeah and one of the girls is in Ohio, one is passed away, too? One is passed away. I don't know where the others are.

CC: And how did you guys get here?

KB: We came by train. Took us six days to get here cus' we wanted to go the longest route we could go. We were just going for the adventures of it.

CC: Did you get to sightsee anywhere on your trip?

KB: Oh you mean on the train? No, we got on that train and we just sit there till we got here.

CC: Did the airline pay, I mean, did Boeing pay for it?

KB: You had to have 50 dollars to leave home and when you got here they picked you at the train station. They took you to a dormitory, you stayed in the dormitory while you got your training and the dormitory was guarded by soldiers. We didn't go out unless a chaperone took us out and if we go dancing or someplace like that, chaperone has to take you. And then on the weekend you can go out to 4 o'clock, I think, and then during the week you can go out till ten. And if you don't obey rules and regulations they send you back home. We met girls from Oklahoma, Texas, from different states that we really did enjoy. But the black men don't want us here and the whites still don't want us. We were in the same building but one on one end and one on the other one.

CC: They kept you separated?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Where were the dorms at?

KB: Oh, I guess it was part, still part of the old segregation law before they really got used to it.

KB: In Georgetown.

CC: In Georgetown, in Seattle?

KB: In Georgetown.

KB: And then after you stay there and get your training, you went to Boeing, where Boeing give you some more training before you actually go to the plant itself.

CC: And you mentioned the fifty dollars, you couldn't leave your house, until you had fifty dollars?

KB: Well, they request, that's for your expense.

CC: So you saved the money?

KB: No, my daddy gave it to me. (laughs)

CC: We had, kinda had a hard time cus' I was supposed to have gone to Tuskegee. My sister was supposed to go to nursing school. So we kept telling our dad, we kept telling our dad, so he finally gave in. So after we had been here for a while he came up to check us. And after we got, there's four of us, I'd say, one, two, three, four, four of us that lived in the same house and we went to Boeing.

CC: What did you do at Boeing; what was your occupation?

KB: I was a mechanic.

CC: How long did you work for Boeing?

KB: 43 years.

CC: What was your typical day like; what did you do?

KB: Oh sometime it was 10-hours, 12-hours. I was lead mechanic and when I retired they made a video of my retirement that was shown in all 48 states plus Hawaii. Because it really was a rite of passage, the reason they did it, because I was in Washington D.C. and they asked me to do it when I got back to Seattle. Because it was getting one that was born, one that was dying of cancer, one that was moving from the East to the West coast and then there was the one that was retiring. And I happen to be retiring at the time.

CC: Was this, just workers of Boeing in general or black women?

KB: At Boeing, it was everybody.

CC: No, the video, when they did the recording?

KB: Oh, yeah, mostly it was all what I was doing, but they did show others on the picture and it shows the retirement, what the supervisors had to say and the other people. And then they sent a camcorder out to the house and at the time I was at Church they came down there. And then they went out down to the Bon Marché where I was lookin' in the window at the clothes and they went up to the senior citizens and took pictures of all of this and recorded it on video.

CC: Do you remember how much you made when you first started at Boeing?

KB: Yeah, 62 cents.

CC: What did you see, what kind of changes? Did it increase over time or...?

KB: Oh yeah, but you know, even though you did 62 cent, you could buy almost as much as you can now because things wasn't as high. And then everything was kind of, you know, according to what you make, according to what the...

CC: ...the wage?

KB: Mhm.

CC: So if you didn't work at Boeing, what do you think you would have done?

KB: Nothing, I don't know. I don't know, I would have found something else I'm sure.

CC: And were you active in the Machinists Union?

KB: Yes, to a degree. Every time somebody, we had to solicit for something, I'd always go around and ask the person for the soliciting. And a lot of times they take pictures of stuff that you're working on. They would always take my pictures, I guess, cus' I was fast or somethin' I don't know. (laughs)

CC: And were you ever a union member before you worked at Boeing?

KB: No, because when you first got here you had to join the union, but the way you joined the union you had to pay \$3 a month and you had to take it down to the union hall which was in Georgetown. And then one man, I think his name was Mr. Stoneworth, his daughter's my goddaughter, and he was complaining about, "We're paying three dollars and the white was payin' a dollar and half." Then they stopped us from payin' anything. Well, the white got angry because we was working, getting the same benefits, they were paying a dollar and a half and we weren't payin' anything. So then they decide to put us in the union. (laughs)

CC: In what year did you start working at Boeing?

KB: '43.

CC: 1943?

KB: Mhm.

CC: When you first came on dues were three dollars?

KB: Yeah.

CC: Do you remember when you joined the union?

KB: I think that must have been 1950 because we were paying three dollars for I don't know how long, but then I did know in 1950 we, they ask you if you wanted a join. If you said no, you just didn't sign the card, because I had a lot of friends who did not sign the card. I said, the way my mind feels I'd better get in something cus' I feel like they doing me wrong, I'm going to really speak up for it. I always spoke up for myself and other people, but make sure you're right before you go where you're gonna go with your mouth.

CC: If they didn't join the union, did they have to pay dues?

KB: No, at that time, no.

CC: And you mentioned that the dorms were segregated?

KB: Well, on one side was the black, on the other side was the white. We all came from different states. But when we got to Boeing there were no segregation as far as working was concerned. We all worked together we all met each other from different states and we liked to discuss how they lived on they side of the town and whatever. So it was very interesting.

CC: Were any of the other black women you worked with ever discriminated against?

KB: I was not because I had a good supervisor for one thing and I went to blueprint school two or three times. And if you improve yourself, come to work every day and do a good job, make sure that job is good and when you know you're right, they can't do anything to you, you can report them too.

CC: Were there a lot of women?

KB: Oh yeah, because all the men had gone to war. There was plenty. A lot of 'em went back home after the war and a lot of 'em stayed here or went to California, back to New York, someplace.

CC: Did you stay on with Boeing after the war?

KB: Mhm.

CC: So you worked continuously?

KB: Well, no, I was off for five years when I had my kids, Mhm, yeah.

CC: And then you came back?

KB: Mhm.

CC: And were you still a mechanic?

KB: Yeah.

CC: What did you work on as a mechanic?

KB: I worked on small parts in the balcony and then I worked on interior trim, interior trim where you made all the parts that goes in the airplane that's in there. We didn't put 'em in, we made 'em and shipped 'em out on the line and they put 'em in.

CC: Did you work with men and women?

KB: Mhm.

CC: At work and working to build a plane, did you guys work in the same areas?

KB: Oh yeah, Mhm.

CC: And when you guys took your lunches and your breaks, did you do that together?

KB: Oh you took 'em with your friends.

CC: Were there a lot of black women?

KB: Oh yeah.

CC: What was your experience, like as a black woman working as a mechanic?

KB: Well, yes, I didn't really have a black woman working with me cus' most of them was white, white ladies, white men and we all worked in the same place. But there wasn't enough, I guess, in that particular part. There were some in interior trim but they was way down on one end and one on another one. Cus' I told the supervisor, I said, "When I leave here I will have no one from my family working at Boeing."

I said, "Because you got your wife, your mother, everybody in your family's here." I said "You got us separated so far apart we couldn't talk to each other if we wanted." But he was a very good, understanding supervisor.

CC: They separated you?

KB: No we didn't do the same type of work, it's the type of work we were doin'. So it was in the area according to where you worked.

CC: So mechanics were in one area?

KB: Mhm.

KB: Some was upholstery, some mechanic. Now one part where I worked we were all together. But then when they sent that part over, then they went with they job. Some of 'em went over to another department. My department we moved from Renton to Everett.

CC: Were there any difference in the?

KB: In the work, the work went with us. We took our work with us and all the equipment and everything else.

CC: Was it all the same people?

KB: Yeah.

CC: Did you have a preference, did you like one area better than the other?

KB: Well, I didn't really want to go to Everett when I left Renton, but after I left Renton and went to Everett, I liked Everett better.

CC: Why?

KB: I don't know, I just sit on the bus and read, cus' I rode the bus. Sometimes I have to drive the weekend. And the same peoples went to.

CC: What year was this around?

KB: Oh let me see. I've gone to Everett twice, so one time it must have been in the '60's, another time in the '80's, and I retired, I think, in the '90's.

CC: Why did they move?

KB: The whole area moved with the job. When you moved, your work moved with you.

CC: Where did you live at when you moved to Everett?

KB: Here.

CC: Same place?

KB: Mhm.

CC: How long did you stay in the dorms?

KB: Oh, two weeks.

CC: And then, where did you go?

KB: I went to, at first I went to 210, that was at Plant Two and I think we stayed at Plant Two for about two months and the whole job moved to Renton. And then I went from Renton to Everett, Renton to Everett, from Everett to Renton, from Renton to Everett. (laughs)

CC: Did you find housing in Everett?

KB: I wasn't looking for any because everybody, we was going, we all still lived in Seattle.

CC: Where at in Seattle did you live?

KB: Right here.

CC: In this house?

KB: Mhm.

CC: How long have you lived in this house?

KB: I moved here, oh before I moved here I lived up on Beacon, but I've been here since 1954.

CC: And how long were you in Beacon?

KB: Well, I was working at Plant, I was workin' in Renton for a while, wasn't very long.

CC: How was the neighborhood?

KB: At that time I put it on real estate guy because there were certain places they were selling you a house and certain places they would not sell you a house.

CC: So what are the places they wouldn't sell you a house?

KB: In the central area.

CC: The central?

KB: That's where they would.

CC: They would sell you a house in the central area?

KB: But they didn't want to sell you, at that time they didn't want to sell you, no houses being sold on Beacon and on Lake Washington and farther on Madison. And so we moved here, I've added on since I've been here, but I've been here ever since.

CC: And how was it living in Seattle?

KB: Oh, I enjoyed it, I had a nice time. Cus' I was just a teenager coming here thinkin' I was gonna have a good time. But what your momma teach you is what you're gonna do. Cus' every time I'd get ready to do something or say a bad word we'd say, "I'll write and tell mama." (laughs) So I didn't get lonesome and homesick on Sundays. We still went to church every Sunday.

CC: Was it a difference from moving to Seattle from Birmingham?

KB: Yes. Quite a bit of difference I'd say because I went to high school in Birmingham. As soon as I left high school I came back here.

CC: Do you remember the high school?

KB: The high school was segregated at that time.

CC: And do you remember the name of the high school?

KB: I went to Cameron for grade school, I went to ---- for Junior High and I went to Parker High for senior. The Parker High School.

CC: And how were race relations?

KB: Well, we were segregated when I was going to school. We had to wear a uniform.

CC: Did you work in Birmingham?

KB: I worked in the principal's office.

CC: Then you came to Seattle?

KB: Mhm.

CC: When you came to Seattle was it segregated?

KB: To a certain extent it was for a while because I didn't go downtown too often because we didn't have a chance to because we was working eight and ten hours a day. But I heard elevators were and then the garbage can mens were, cus' they wanted white on the garbage until, you know, they gradually had to have somewhere to put the black. You see it wasn't too many blacks here at that time because you can go downtown and stay all day and all the blacks you see was yourself and who you went down there with. So it has improved.

But another thing I notice about Seattle now, on the construction, you don't see no blacks on it. On the TV right now, you don't see any black kids doin' commercials, nothing but dogs. I'm so sick of dogs I don't know what to do. And over there, at that park, it was, the water used to always come and flood out the basement and everything, until we got some white lawyers that moved in then they really started workin on it. And I asked the guys, "Why are you in the black neighborhood working when there's no blacks out there?" He said, they put the work to a company, allotted to a company, and the company do the hiring.

I said, "Well, I don't think it's fair for all whites over there and in a black neighborhood." At that time we were in a black neighborhood.

CC: When you came to Seattle, how was downtown?

KB: Well, I didn't go down there to tell you the truth about it because of Boeing. We go down and get the bus and go out to Georgetown where we first got. And then I would get the bus and go to Renton, I'll get a ride to go to Renton, but it was okay with me because they were nice.

CC: What did black people do in Seattle to have fun?

KB: Oh, they work at department stores and hotels and restaurants.

CC: What did you guys do in your free time? Where did you go?

KB: Oh, in our free time we would go to, to the passes where it snow, we would go to Canada, we would go to east of the mountains. We had a club at the Y we called the Friendship Club and we go there and, oh, we went to the USO. We talked to the soldiers, we drank coffee with them and we danced with them. And they don't go with you, they don't leave the USO with you and we had this club. We were in the first, it wasn't Mardi Gras, the first parade they had. We had our little car and we were sittin' in our little car and we was the missing link at that time. And we would roll way down 23rd all the way up Madison Street and we were all members of the Y and we all went to church.

CC: You mentioned that even in Seattle they supported the Civil Rights Movement?

KB: Oh, yes.

CC: So you were here during Martin Luther King? What was happening in Seattle during that time?

KB: Let me see, I was, I was here, you know, my mom and my sister would write and tell me about it, but after, let's see, I've been to just about every state there is in the United States. I've been to Spain, I've been to France, I've been to Rome, I've been to all those places and I find out that, you know, the news keep going and keep coming. But where they were during the demonstration was in Selma more or less. That's where my father was born, in Selma.

And then in Birmingham we have, we used to have our state convention of national Baptists and we were at the motel, where you could walk to that church. Now my sister, my sister-in-law goes to that church. She sent me a big old picture of that church where those six girls passed and they got a park there and you can go for sightseeing in that church at a certain time. And across the street over there they got the bus where they rode on and they got a long tour that you can take inside what they built and they got a tour of the park. But that's after I was here in Seattle. I went to Birmingham for the national Baptist convention.

CC: Do you remember any protest demonstrations in Seattle?

KB: I imagine there were some, oh heck yes. (laughs) But I wasn't at 'em. (laughs)

CC: What do you remember?

KB: I wasn't in 'em. See I was working, you know, going to church and working and there was the peoples more politically inclined than I was.

CC: When did they start to integrate the neighborhoods?

KB: Well, I, well they were over here, they were over here, they were always in the neighborhood, but the Japanese and Chinese was more or less in here and the blacks.

CC: You mentioned when you first started you used to ride the bus to work?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Was the bus integrated?

KB: Uh-uh.

CC: It was segregated?

KB: Oh, let me get this straight, no first one get on that, pay the fare is where you at. It was integrated, the buses, yes.

CC: And so the busses here in Seattle was integrated, but Birmingham was not?

KB: No, they wasn't. Cus' you know they just unveiled Rosa Parks. Well, see she started the segregation being ended on those buses. Cus' you could pay your fare in Birmingham at the door and then you walk back and it's crowded back there. Now I used to, during the summertime, I used to babysit in order to buy my uniform. And when I, if the sun got too hot, I quit that job. My dad he would just say, "Kate are you gonna? keep a job over two weeks?"

I said, "Dad would be surprised to know I kept one job for 42 years." (laughs) Cus' I'd work, you know, till I'd get what I want and then I wouldn't go back anymore.

And he'd say, "Well, you're not doing anything so we'll take you out ridin', we'll buy you ice cream and why are you quitting?"

Well I didn't have to work, I wasn't getting nothing, so I just get what I needed then I didn't go. But what I did I did it good, always have.

CC: When you were in Birmingham, you babysat?

KB: Only in the summertime when school was out.

CC: Did you have to do anything else as a babysitter? You just watched the kids?

KB: Just watched the kids. It was most always one kid.

CC: So you came here and when you started off at Boeing, you were making 62 cents an hour?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Did that include, benefits, like medical?

KB: Boeing always have here, I just said, boys have good fresh benefits, always have, still have. Yeah, they had good benefits, fringe benefits, still do.

CC: Would the wages and the working conditions change over the years?

KB: I think after so many time your wages went up to 82 cents because we was working second shift and second shift got ten cent more than the day shift. And every night, every so often, it'd go up and you'd get upgraded, cus' I got upgraded from a beginner to a C, C mechanic. And then I got to a six mechanic, then a lead mechanic. And now they make twice as much as I made when I was going there.

CC: How much do they make now?

KB: I don't know.

CC: A lot. (laughs)

KB: Cus' I, I kid the girls that go. I instruct school in the nursery on Saturday. So I was telling her, I said, "I'm gonna fire all of you, put you back on the blueprint. (laughs) Cus' you mess it up."

CC: And what's the blueprint?

KB: That was the paper you worked on, you know you didn't do computer to make plans, you had a blueprint. And you read this blueprint, how to put the parts together and you work from ADCN and DCN. If they make a change already on the drawing it was a DCN. But if it's one that had to be incorporated with the drawing it was a ADCN and that's what we had to work from mostly.

KB: I teach this lady that goes to school.. Sometimes she works 12 hours, seven days a week. And she say, "These young people they just not interested in really doing a good job and sticking with it."

CC: How many days a week did you work?

KB: It all depends. If your area was behind schedule then you would probably work seven days a week but if you on schedule everything going you just did your five days a week, eight hours a day.

CC: Did you workload slow down after the war?

KB: Yeah, after the war most of us left and didn't went back because they just shut the plant down, shut the plant, the factory down completely.

CC: Cus' they didn't need any more?

KB: It's because that was the war in the Pacific for the west coast and for the east coast it was the war, the European war.

CC: And so when they shut down the plant, what did you do?

KB: Oh I came home.

CC: Did you work?

KB: I did do a couple of weeks at a children's home while this lady was in Alaska. I was just replacin' her until she came. But I was taking those kids so much to heart, until honest to Pete, I feel sorry for some of 'em being adopted and they needed a sister or brother and I think I felt sorry for them than they did for themselves.

CC: After you finished, you said you did that for a couple of weeks?

KB: Yeah, because the lady came back from Alaska to get her job.

CC: What did you do after?

KB: I had Michael, where's Michael? There's Michael up there, and I stayed at home.

CC: Then when you returned back to work?

KB: I went back as a mechanic.

CC: Did you get to keep your union seniority?

KB: Yeah, they gave you your seniority back, Mhm. I retained my seniority.

CC: Did you guys ever strike?

KB: Yeah, let me see, I think I been at Boeing twice when they struck.

CC: How was that, how was the first strike, do you remember the first strike?

KB: No I don't, not too much. See because the first time they struck what did I do, nothing. Cus' I don't think they give you unemployment when you're on strike, I don't think you get it. You just live on what you got. And see my sister and I, we wasn't married at first, so we just lived together. There was four of us living together in a two-bedroom. So we just take turns in paying the rent and buying the food and stuff like that.

CC: And then the second time?

KB: Uh, we stayed out a long time on the second time. I don't remember too much. I now, see when you're on strike the union give you a check. So one time we picked up our check at the Renton Ball Park and one time we picked it up at Kingdome and one time we picked it up at the Horse Racetrack wherever the horse racin' was.

CC: Oh, you must have been on strike a while?

KB: Well, you see, you go on the strike and it all depends on how it lasts cus' every week you get a check while you on..

CC: Do you remember what the strike was about?

KB: It was negotiation I guess and we voted to strike and everybody voted to strike then they go out. Not that we want to really go on, but you gotta go with the majority.

CC: And so you participated in both of those strikes. Did you walk on the picket line?

KB: Oh yeah. The first one I walked on I got a cold and I told the fella I said, "I got a cold, you've gotta send a replacement out for me." They didn't send us in any coffee, they said they sorry, forgot that. So the next time they went on strike I worked at the union office, so that's where I was.

CC: What'd you do at the union office?

KB: When they come in they check in for the ones who's gonna go out in the field or whoever going to carry the picket sign, or whatever.

CC: Do you remember how long that lasted?

KB: It didn't last as long as the second, I don't think.

CC: And were you guys happy when that contract got settled?

KB: Yeah, you know, almost, quite a few of them didn't know the strike was over until a couple days later. (laughs) But it was nice out.

CC: How did you find out that the strike was over?

KB: You listen to the radio or listen in your car to tell you.

CC: And where was the union office that you were working in at that time?

KB: It was up in South Center.

CC: Was there men and women out on strike at Boeing?

KB: Some of the ladies wanted to go out.

CC: All right. You were at Boeing 43 years, what are some of the changes or improvements you've seen happen with Boeing?

KB: Well, one of, it must have been about three or four years, the union had us come out there to the hall. They took us to Boeing Plant 2 and they took us to Boeing Renton, they gave us a lunch, they gave us a cup and somethin' else and they gave us an escort when we went out there, which we got pictures taken of us. And then that night we went out to the union hall where we was introduced out there. So they was really nice. The union making amends for what they didn't do.

CC: What are some of the changes? You were a union member then for about 40 years?

KB: I'm a lifetime-retired member. I don't pay dues or anything, but I can vote or do whatever they do and they sends me a paper. Every time they send a paper out I get one. But you have to register for that paper once a year. I guess as my friend said, to let 'em know they still livin'. (laughs) So, I guess the paper and then after, they have now what they call, what do they call it? We used to go out sometime out to different places for speeches and for the ones who were doing the war. And I just got a card and we was on the calendar, they have a calendar for the ones who worked in the war on your birthday, and my friends, all of us, they on the calendar.

CC: Your sister worked for Boeing?

KB: Yes.

CC: How long did she work for Boeing?

KB: Well she worked at Boeing, not as long, she worked until it was over and then she worked at the shipyard.

CC: Oh.

KB: Uh-huh, and then she worked at University of Washington.

CC: Was she a member of a union at the shipyard?

KB: No, but see once you a member of the union, you keep your dues up, you still a member and you can get a retirement, I mean you can be a...

CC: Boeing retiree member; you're on the retiree committee?

KB: Mhm.

CC: What are some of the changes you've seen with the machinists, with the union since you were a member in 43 years?

KB: I do think the union was very, very fair if somebody didn't treat you right or was not doing what they should do in the shop. You had a shop steward and you can tell the shop steward and he can see if he can sell it, if not then he get a Boeing representative. So I think they really work well and they represented the people who did not belong to it, so I knew I wanted to be represented, so I joined the union and I have not regretted it.

CC: Have you seen a lot more women and a lot more blacks, get jobs at Boeing?

KB: Yeah, I've seen a lot of 'em.

CC: What year did you retire in?

KB: Let me see, when did I, 1992 I think it was.

CC: Yeah, but you've still been active with the union?

KB: I don't go out there. They have a picnic, they have a lot of things, but I'm too busy so I don't ever get to go. One play and if they ever ask me to do another play and another one and I'm getting too old for that, but I'm President of my Usher Board at my church and I also teach school nursery on Saturday. And last year, well last year I was selected to be a, what am I, elected to be a teacher, instructor of the year for United Ushers and that was in Florida; where we had our convention.

CC: And I remember, you saying when you started at Boeing your dues were \$3.00 and then they went to nothing and then they went back to a \$1.50?

KB: I don't...no, they went up from there, but I can't recall what it was. Oh yeah, they went up, you know, it's like your wages go up, the union go up, cus' they have more representatives and they call for things. But I don't, they took, they started taking it out of your check.

CC: Was it safe at work? Did they change anything like safety? Were you high up in the air or low in the air?

KB: Well, no, when I was working at Boeing you had to wear pants down to the shoe top. You didn't wear no sleeveless blouse. And then when I got to retirement I was almost shocked. Some of those ladies and men had on shorts. We weren't allowed to wear tennis shoes.

CC: What kind of shoes did you wear?

KB: Leather.

CC: Boots?

KB: Uh-huh, just regular, what they wear now. The ones you would go in for on, if you going to jog, those kind of shoes. So I would wear my regular shoes, when I get to work, I put them shoes on.

CC: Did you have to wear gloves or cover your hair?

KB: It all depends. We didn't wear on the head. It all depends on what you workin' on. Now I wore a white coat, a white apron, keep my clothes clean and keep the parts clean. You wore gloves to keep the parts clean cus' a lot of time we work in Ketone, Acetone and different stuff like that, so you put the gloves on and when you're workin' in glue and stuff you wear gloves to keep it off your hands.

CC: Did they have a locker room, where you changed?

KB: No, we didn't. But it was a lot of restrooms, a lot of restrooms were around, I can just walk out of my area right to that door and there would be the restroom I used.

CC: And were the restrooms integrated?

KB: Oh, yeah. Always have been. Nice and clean.

CC: Did they have any managers that were black when you first began?

KB: When I first went, no.

CC: When you retired did you see some black managers?

KB: Oh yeah, plenty of 'em, general supervisors.

CC: Were some of them women?

KB: Yes, some of 'em was women. Mhm, cus' I use to ride to work with one. She lived down by the lake and she drove the bus and she was a supervisor.

CC: How did that make you feel seeing the changes?

KB: Well, it's good. Cus' I was enjoying what I was doin'.

CC: You said you were married, what did your husband do?

KB: He worked at Bethlehem.

CC: How long did he work there?

KB: Let me see, I think he must have stopped in '87 and died in '97.

CC: What did he do?

KB: He was a crane operator.

CC: Crane operator.

KB: Mhm.

CC: You mentioned, at first you lived in Beacon Hill and then you moved over to?

KB: Well, after I lived in Beacon Hill I moved up there by Coleman School, it was Coleman School at that time, right there. Because they was tearing down those apartments on Beacon Hill, so we moved up in Coleman, where the Coleman School is and then I moved over here. Cus' they was getting ready to tear those down too.

CC: Why were they tearing it down? Were they building something else?

KB: Yeah. Some of them build houses on and some of them they build playfields on.

CC: Then you moved?

KB: See they was owned by the government, project houses, and so they were going back to the government and they was just using those houses for war, for people to live when they worked for the war, in the war.

CC: And how did you decide to move down here?

KB: Well, we were looking for a house from a real estate and I told him that I did not want to move across Madison. So he was looking for houses that was on this side of Madison, but when I got it, it was a, well I had a big living room, dining room made, I had a big rec room. And downstairs we had it fixed up like an apartment. My grandson was living down there.

CC: Why didn't you want to live on the other side of Madison?

KB: Because my church was over here. My church is on 20th, right up there by Garfield, People's Institution of Baptists. What church you go to?

CC: Uh.

KB: Oh shame, come to my church, for a visit anyway.

CC: Was this neighborhood all black?

KB: No, because the one next door, a postman was living there and the next one up there she and her husband both worked at Boeing. And the next one, the lady is still there, she and her husband, they're white. And the next one, yeah, more or less this whole block more

or less was.. And see there was houses over there, but during the flood they either tore 'em down or they moved 'em over there by the nursing home.

CC: How was this neighborhood? You said you moved here in the '60's, the '50's?

KB: No, I moved here in '54.

CC: Was it quiet?

KB: Always have been, still is.

CC: Lots of families?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Did you have friends?

KB: Well, everybody was workin' so either we're going to church but we all talked to each other when we saw each other. And then Mr. Jenkins that lived over there, his daughter went to California but she came back and her husband is a doctor and her mom used to work for 'em. I said, "How did you like working for your relatives?"

CC: So, you mentioned that you had adopted grandparents?

KB: Yeah, cus' my mom's mom died when she was 13 years old. My mom worked in the laundry to take care of herself and her brother. So the lady that lived right in front of them took my mom and helped her with us and we called her grandmother and we called him grandpa, and they was the best grandmother and grandfather that you've ever seen.

CC: Your mom was a laundress when she was growin' up?

KB: Well, see, after her mom died she had to go to work. But my uncle, my mom's brother, worked at a drugstore. But when this guy retired my uncle got the drugstore he did everything but the prescription. And he did that until he passed. So he just worked, he owned a drugstore after Mr. Wilson passed.

CC: And what did your dad do?

KB: My dad was a salesman. He sold material.

CC: Did he travel?

KB: Just around in the neighborhood and you know, different places. And it was, he worked out of, on First Avenue out of a Jewish place and they were so nice to my dad and to us. So we go to Birmingham they'd always had to take us by there.

CC: Where did his parents live?

KB: Oh, my dad's parents. No, I never did see my dad, any of my grandparents. Now that picture up there in the middle, that's my mom and the one on the end over there, that's my grandmother.

CC: Your dad was born in Selma?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Did he ever tell you any stories as a kid?

KB: No, because he left when he was, oh long before they had desegregation or anything. See because when my mom met him he was in Birmingham, so was my mom.

CC: Did your mom have any stories from childhood?

KB: Not too much I don't suppose.

CC: Were there a lot of women that came to work for Boeing, were they from Alabama or from the south?

KB: No, some was from Texas, some was from Oklahoma, some was from Tennessee, different southern states, and West Virginia, New York, different places.

CC: And you all worked together?

KB: Mhm.

CC: One last thing. I want to ask a little more about the strike.

KB: My mom?

CC: No, you mentioned that when you came here and you were at Boeing and there were two big, two strikes.

KB: Mhm.

CC: What kind of stuff did they do on the strike line?

KB: Oh, they just held the picket, held a sign up, that is all they did.

CC: Did you guys get a lot of support from the community?

KB: Yeah, when the cars go by they blow and then a lot of people have breads that you can take home, had a lot of apples and different stuff that you can take home. And then the union hall would have lunch and then they would fix lunch to take it out on the line to the

peoples who worked on the picket line. And they would take coffee out to 'em that worked on the picket line.

CC: You worked in the union office the second time?

KB: Mhm.

CC: What kind of work did you do when you were working in the union office?

KB: They have a big old thing like that and when they check in, see you got to check in and let 'em know you're there to get your paycheck. And so they just tell me what the name is and I pull the cards out.

CC: And they had to check in every day?

KB: Every day. You didn't have to, you didn't have to work picket line every day. They'd send you a card what days you supposed to work.

CC: How many days did people usually need to work on a picket line?

KB: Oh about two or three times a week. Some of 'em come every day. Cus' I didn't mind going every day; I was enjoying it. (laughs) Seeing the peoples you know, pulling the cards, it was fun. Cus' I wasn't doing anything at home, so some of 'em come every day and made the sandwiches to send out. A lot of 'em made the coffee to send out.

CC: Was the office by the picket?

KB: No, the office is where it is now, out in Georgetown. You know where Plant 2 is? Once you go over that hill, that's where the office was.

CC: Where was the picket at?

KB: Oh, they picket Plant 2, they picket Renton, you know in the streets where the plants are. They just roll a sign, roll a sign up.

CC: Do you remember if there were any other unions that came out to support you guys?

KB: A lot of 'em, they supported us and a lot of others, they didn't stop workin' but they would hold the sign.

CC: Do you remember going or participating in any other union events while you were a member, that you can think of?

KB: Let me see, what did I, they have a lot of things to do like the picnics. I'd go around to hear some of the politicians at the union hall, but the reason I really don't go to the meetings and different things because I have so many other things that I'm involved in.

CC: When you worked at Boeing, how old was the youngest?

KB: There were some kids could work half day if they were going to high school and they could only work four hours, and they were still in high school. But if you were 16 and finished high school, you could.

CC: Were they black and white?

KB: Mhm. See they went to school by day but they could work in the afternoon for four hours, only four hours.

CC: Were they boys and girls?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Did they make the same rate?

KB: I suppose so, yeah. Cus' you got paid by the hour, Mhm.

CC: How were things during the war?

KB: Oh, the ration of the shoes. You can get a stamp from Boeing and you take it downtown and you get these shoes with the steel toe in 'em and that's the one you could get with the stamp. And then there were some ladies that worked there, they were particular about buying extra stamps, so they gave 'em the stamps. And then the butter was rationed, so they would give you they stamps so you can get more butter. And sugar was rationed, so they didn't, one lady came from Germany; her boyfriend was killed in the war. She would give me all her shoe stamps, her butter stamps and her shoe stamps and she would tell me about when she grew up in Germany and I just loved to listen to her and I get her stamp. And there was another guy that worked that they called "Black Market Benny" cus' he would buy the candy and if you do his work you can get some candy free.
(laughs)

CC: Why did they ration the butter and the sugar?

KB: Oh, because see it was limited what you could have and wasn't that much goin' on during the war because after the war was over, another Japanese fella came and his mom was Chinese, she didn't have to go to the camp. His dad was Japanese one way or the other and they had to go to the camp. So when he came back he says, "You Americans was eatin' margarine and we was eatin' butter." (laughs) So I guess they fed them good. Cus' at one time that's all you could get was margarine, unless you had the stamp to get the butter.

CC: How did you get the stamps?

KB: How did we get those stamps? I know I got all of mine from that lady. We weren't cookin' anyway, but we got the butter. But the sugar and the shoes, but we could go to Canada and get any kind of sugar you want without a stamp.

CC: Did the stamps cost money?

KB: No.

CC: You get them for free?

KB: Mhm.

CC: And how much?

KB: But you then had to pay for the shoes when you were downtown. But with the stamp the shoes was cheaper.

CC: Did everybody get stamps?

KB: If they wanted 'em they requested 'em. But then they find out that the steel toe wasn't too good for your toes. So they kinda did away with that. As long as there was leather shoes that laced up.

CC: And how much sugar do you get?

KB: Oh, they only give to you about five pound and then nylon was rationed. Cigarettes was rationed and if you see a long line you jump in that line, you don't know what this, what's going on. I got in a line and stood for about two hours for some cigarettes that I didn't even smoke. (laughs) But see, when you get in a line sometimes they ration the stocking, the silk stocking, sometimes it might be a butter line or it might be a sugar line and you just get in there and they allow you so much. You pay for it, but they allow you so much.

CC: What did you do with the cigarettes?

KB: When I got up there I didn't get 'em.

CC: Did you eat certain things? How did you use the butter and the sugar? Did you make more or less?

KB: Yeah well I can say I didn't know how to cook. So I cook by mistake and error and I brought back a cookbook and certain things, you know, were sweet, cus' we ate out most of the time. But we used the sugar. My cousin could cook, so she would make the dessert and she would use the butter. And she worked at Camp Jordan, out on, out on First Avenue.

CC: What else do you remember about working at Boeing during the war?

KB: Chocolate was rationed. Candy.

CC: What if you ran out of a ration? Could you get more?

KB: I don't know, because we never did run out. See because there was four of us in the house and by the time all of us got some we had plenty.

CC: How was it working at Boeing during the war?

KB: I thought it was nice, I really did. It was experience to me and to know how boys was dressed. When you look at it, it look like a little City, cus' they had all this camouflage on. And if you work in the 100 shop, they wore a different color button on the back. And if you worked in the balcony, or if you worked graveyard and I worked second shift and I think mine was a green badge on there. And you go down in a tunnel and whatever your shop is that's the tunnel you went on. See, we were up in the balcony, so when we got to the step that lead up to the balcony, that's where we went. And you weren't allowed out of your area.

CC: What was the shift time? What's second shift?

KB: Second shift started at 3:30? four. Day shift started about seven. Graveyard started at eleven.

CC: And how were the supervisors?

KB: They were all nice to me because I did my work, I didn't goof off and I always was present.

CC: Were all the supervisors nice to everyone?

KB: To me, there were a foreman, some of 'em on the back of their coat they wore, some says assistant foreman, some says foreman on their coat and what they wear. And if you did your work, stay out of the restroom when you didn't have to go, they didn't bother you.

CC: Were any of them prejudiced?

KB: Only one, that's when I was just before I retired up in Everett, and he was taking me to to the office. The whistle blew, they had these little crunchy thing that you step on, bubble thing, and it was gonna be the 4th of July. So I had my back to him, he wasn't my supervisor. So I was stepping on 'em crunching 'em up and everybody was this way, they saw him comin', and when he got to me, I told him, I said, "You're not my supervisor."

He said, "Everybody else in here is sweeping."

And I said, "I'm not runnin' from you cus' I'm not doin' nothin' wrong." So he turned me in.

So the lady from the personnel come, cus' I told my supervisor, I says, "What if I crunch these things up?"

He said, "Whatever make you happy, you do it." (laughs) And when they come in there he went into the office with me. Well see they had already looked at my record, so she told me, she said, "I'm not going to put this on your record."

I said, "I know cus' I'm retiring anyway."

She said, "But if you want to bring him in you can do so."

I said, "No, I don't." He had one of these boxes, you know, that you put under your neck, to hear your voice and he was from Oklahoma. He was prejudiced. Because I had asked my supervisor if he would take the black boy in our area cus' the supervisor was not nice to him and one of his own members said, "Kate, I'm sorry, he don't like black folks."

I said, "That's okay" and I told that guy and I said, "And I asked for you to come to my area." I said, "You'd better be here today and you'd better do your work and you'd better not goof off."

CC: This was the young black boy?

KB: Mhm.

CC: Did you ever have any other problems with the one supervisor, that wasn't your supervisor?

KB: One supervisor told me, he says, "You're behind schedule."

I says, "No, I'm not."

He says, "Well you didn't mark up the chart."

I said, "Well I can't mark up a chart and do the work too."

He said, "Well if you stay on schedule I won't come back here."

And I stayed on schedule and I never did see him and by that time another supervisor that I had before, I asked him, "What about an upgrade?" Cus' I was just a B then.

He said, "Well come down to the office, you'll go to personnel and put for an upgrade."
And they thought they was going to put me on second shift, but that supervisor was extra nice. I used to like to talk to him about Montana and going to the outhouse. I didn't know what an outhouse was.

CC: What is that?

KB: Where you go outside to be excused.

CC: Oh.

KB: Cus' I used to see 'em on the train, all these little houses sitting' out there and they said they was an outhouse. And they was just sayin' they used the outhouse from Sears and Roebuck. I said, "What that was?"

She said, "That was the toilet paper." So you learn a lot from working with people from other states. You thought you were bad, "I'm in a bad condition" but some people's always in a worse condition then you are. And just thank God and praise God that you are where you are.

CC: My last question is, what do you think about how things are going at Boeing now?

KB: I haven't been there since '92. I've gone there for retirement for other people and so that's probably as much as I've gone there. Cus' the lady did her granddaughter's name after me and another lady I went to her retirement and at the time I went to her retirement, six of 'em was retiring the same day. But I didn't know the other's was retiring.

CC: When you got called into the office for the HR, did you have to call the union, did your union rep?

KB: Uh-huh.

CC: You just went with your supervisor?

KB: Mhm and he didn't have to go cus' there's personnel in the office could have taken care of that. Cus' they knew him and they knew me, so you know, your character can speak for itself, but may the work I've done speak for me. So that's why you want to do as well as you can, when you can, so when somebody gonna tell somethin' on you they know your record.

CC: You didn't have any problems for 30 years.

KB: That's right, that's right.

CC: Hard worker.

KB: Yes.

CC: All right. Well, that is all I can think of. I guess my one last question is, sounds like you had a great life working at Boeing.

KB: I always have, Mhm.

CC: And you think some of the benefits, some of the things you were able to do in life was because of your union job at Boeing?

KB: Yeah. To me, because sometimes we have a convention and we ask the union for some souvenirs for our pack. They've always given us pencils to put in our pack. Yeah, I thought the union was very fair and very cooperative and still do.

CC: And that's why you're still active. (laughs)

KB: Yeah, yes. (laughs)

END OF INTERVIEW

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Oral History Release Agreement

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Photo taken of Ruth Render

CC: Hi, this is Cheryl Coney and it is February 28th at 4:05 p.m. and I'm going to be interviewing Ruth Render. So what is your name?

RR: Ruth Render, R-E-N-D-E-R.

CC: And how old are you?

RR: 79 years old.

CC: And when were you born?

RR: When?

RR: I was born 1933, September 12th, 1933.

CC: And where were you born at?

RR: I was born in Ashdown, Arkansas.

CC: And how long have you lived in the Pacific Northwest?

RR: Since before I was 16 years old - over 67, more than 67 years.

CC: And can you tell me about your family background? Do you have any brothers or sisters?

RR: I had two sisters and one brother. I'm the last sibling. They've all passed on. My father died when I was like 12 or 13 and my mother lived long after that. But she came to Seattle until we graduated from high school and then she went back home. She came here several times.

CC: And so when did you leave Arkansas?

RR: The last of 1949 I believe.

CC: And so what made you come to Seattle?

RR: Well, we didn't have very much work there. My sister and her brother, my sister and her husband lived here. So we came up. My brother came up first and I came up second. My younger sister went to Arizona where my grandmother lived in Arizona, so they stayed there.

CC: And what were, what were they doing in Seattle?

RR: They worked for Boeing - my sister and her husband.

CC: Oh, and what did you do in Arkansas before you came to Seattle?

RR: I was a child, I went to school. (laughs)

CC: When did you start at Boeing, do you...?

RR: I started Boeing May 5th, 1953.

CC: And what did you do?

RR: I worked in, like the shop, for riveting, assembly and things like that.

CC: What is riveting?

RR: Riveting is where you put parts together, you know, a rivet is small, like a nut, something like a nut and you have a rivet gun on one side and the bucking bar on the other, so, it's what you have to do. One's on one side, you know, to secure this panel that you're working on.

CC: Did you dress like Rosie the Riveter?

RR: I dressed like, I dressed nice every single day. I don't know how the Rosie's dressed because that was before my time. You know, back in the 40's when they were working during the war.

CC: So when did you start at Boeing?

RR: 1953.

CC: Did you have a uniform?

RR: We didn't wear uniforms. Oh, no, Mhm.

CC: So, when you worked, you worked as a riveter your whole time at Boeing?

RR: No, no, no, I worked in electronics. I went from commercial aerospace and about probably four years I was in aerospace. We did the printed circuit cards and wire assemblies.

CC: And what, what was a day like? What was your typical workday?

RR: We do have to keep busy, you know, stay on schedule. So that was like, the work was, it was okay, you know, and I didn't complain I just did what I needed to do.

CC: How many hours a day did you work?

RR: Well sometimes, our regular shift was eight hours, but oftentimes I'd work maybe 10, 12 hours and could work as long as 14 hours a day.

CC: Was it a like five-day week?

RR: Sometimes seven days a week, sometimes. We had to work long hours to meet schedules.

CC: Were there a lot of women?

RR: There were many women, Mhm, yes, there were.

CC: Did you work with a lot of black women?

RR: There were a few black women.

CC: How about young, did you work with any young people?

RR: That's all I worked with, young people, like the engineers, the planners and those guys, they were young. And a lot of the inspectors were young. I worked mostly with younger people. That's why my life has stayed young at Boeing. The younger people was, it was easy for me to get along with them because you could teach them, you could learn something from them as well. You know.

CC: And what brought you to Boeing?

RR: I needed a job.

CC: And how did you go, how was the hiring, what was the hiring process like?

RR: We went down to, think they had an employment office on Second Avenue. That was in the olden days, which is no longer there. And you went there and you applied and if you were accepted, you know, you had to go to school and learn what you needed to and at Boeing, there are many classes that are taught there in whatever field you're going to be in. So that's the way I learned.

CC: So you just took classes at Boeing?

RR: I did take classes at Boeing, yes.

CC: Did they have other jobs, if people went down to the employment office?

RR: They had many other jobs cus' back then the jobs few and far between, there's jobs for the stores, you know work in the store expediting. So I didn't do that, I just took the job that was available for me.

CC: Did you have a preference?

RR: No, you didn't back then, you didn't know.

CC: And when you came to Boeing did you join the union?

RR: Not right away, but I did later though, yes.

CC: And do you remember how much the dues were?

RR: They were not very much cus' our salaries were only like 62 cents an hour when they first hired in.

CC: How long was the salary 62 cents an hour?

RR: Oh I can't remember. We got raises from time-to-time but there weren't that very many raises, you know.

CC: Was that good for the time?

RR: It was good for the time, yes, cus' a lot of things were not as expensive as they are, you know, now, later on.

CC: Do you know how much, people made if they worked at the store or like as a domestic worker?

RR: Well they made about the same probably.

RR: I don't think there was, really I don't know, but I don't think there was a big, large difference in them, you know.

CC: Were you ever in a union before you became a member of the machinists?

RR: Oh, no, no.

CC: And what made you join the machinists?

RR: Well my sister and her husband they kind of insisted, "You need to join the Union; you need to join the Union now." In those days the unions were not very kind to black people, in those days, you know. No, they were not. You know if you needed help they would not help you and they would not be very fair, very truthful with you, so. Later on, you know, I joined the Union.

CC: So were your sister, was your sister and your brother a member of the machinists?

RR: Yes, Mhm.

CC: And so when you became a member, I guess, what was it like when you first began working at Boeing?

RR: I was young, I had fun. I worked with a nice group of younger people and it was really a lot of fun. I didn't have any complaints. For instance some managers, you know, from like places like Idaho, they were not accustomed to be around black people, they were kind of rude. But I always put them in their place in a hurry and went on. I had, I had an answer for everything, so...

CC: And was the workplace segregated?

RR: Oh no, no, no, no. No workplace was segregated, no.

CC: And when, if the managers that weren't used to working around black people, did they ever try to punish you?

RR: The way they would speak to you, it was like talking to a child. This one guy said to me one day, "I want you to get down to this section, not minutes later, but now."

I said, "Who do you think you're talking to?"

"You know you're working for me."

I says, "No, I work for the Boeing. You just happen to be my assigned supervisor."

I walked right into the superintendent's office and turned him in. In those days they weren't sending guys to management school to learn how to work with people. So I went and had a talk with the superintendent and he made him go to school and said if I had any more problems, you know, to let him know. But in those days they thought they could say whatever they wanted, you know, and be disrespectful, you know, and talk to you like they were from, you know, Idaho, wherever they came from, you know.

No, he told me, "You know I've not worked with black people."

I says, "They're no different. When you cut me I bleed just like you do. So there's no difference you know. People are people and you need to know that too. You need to understand that we all human beings, we like to be treated alike."

And so then he calmed down. He had to come back apologize to me and he said, "You know what, I'm sorry for the way I treated you, but I have a wife and seven children and my wife has cancer."

And I said, "You know, that's your problem, you need to take your burdens to the Lord and leave them there and don't take your frustrations out on me cus' you are dealing with the wrong person." I never had any more problems out of him.

CC: Did you still continue to work with him?

RR: Yeah, he, they made him go on swing shift and I stayed on days.

CC: What was the day, what hours or days?

RR: Days was like from 6:30, 7:00 till about 3:00.

CC: When you worked at Boeing, were you in the, where were you located at?

RR: I worked in Renton, Renton Benaroya, Plant 2, Developmental Center, Kent Space Center, which is just all aerospace. Like Developmental Center, that was a black hole, top secret, I worked a lot of top secret places. You know you couldn't talk about it. And, you know what to talk about a lot of times, you know, cus' you would do these things and you did 'em, you forgot about 'em, and were briefed and debriefed so many times, you know, how could you retain anything. You know.

CC: You were mentioning about that manager from Idaho. Did they have any black managers or women managers?

RR: They had a few, not in those days, they had a few back in those days but they were taught, you know, against us, you know. You couldn't go to them for any help. If you talked to them they would lie and say, "Oh I didn't do this, I didn't do that." Cus I and most of these guys were from Louisiana, the black, all of the black supervisors, most of them were from Louisiana.

CC: Were there any black women?

RR: There might have been a few black women. I never had a black woman supervisor, no, I did not.

CC: And what was it like living in Seattle during that time?

RR: It was fine. I had no problem in Seattle. Seattle has always been a wonderful place to live.

CC: When you lived in Arkansas, how were things?

RR: Things were fine cus' we had our own property. We had 40 acres, was it 50 acres of land in the, people who lived next door to us, they were white, but everybody had their own land right there, you know, so we didn't have to work for anybody. You know.

CC: And how did you used to get to work?

RR: To work? I took the bus when I didn't have a car. Take a bus on 32nd and East Madison; took the bus. And if I had to get somewhere else I'd take the bus to wherever I needed to go. And eventually, you know, I got transportation. So that was great.

CC: And how were the busses? Were the busses integrated?

RR: Yeah, the busses were always integrated. I never had a problem in Seattle riding a bus, no.

CC: And where did you live at?

RR: 32nd Avenue East, across Madison.

CC: And how long did you live there?

RR: I lived there for a while, you know, until I got a job at Boeing and then I got an apartment.

CC: And how were the neighborhoods?

RR: The neighborhoods were great. Everyone got a long in those days. It's unlike what it is now.

RR: We had integrated neighborhoods and neighbors were all different kind of people, so I never had any problem with the neighbors at all.

CC: So you said you worked at Renton and at Kent.

RR: I worked at Renton. I worked at Kent Space Center, Renton Benaroya, which was all this electronic manufacturing facilities. And on Development Center, I worked at Plant 2. I retired from the IsoLab, which is an engineering lab over on East Marginal Way.

CC: Did you do the same thing at all the different...?

RR: Yeah, electronics, I did electric work, printed circuit cards.

CC: What was that like?

RR: It was great, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the soldering, you know, it was working on finished circuit cards, that's really neat.

CC: Was it a lot of hard work?

RR: No, it wasn't hard work; it was just a lot of concentration. You had to work under a microscope and you just have to concentrate.

CC: Were there a lot of women?

RR: There were lots of women, yes, Mhm.

CC: When you worked at Boeing did you work there continuously or did you take any breaks?

RR: I was laid off a few times, Mhm.

CC: When were you laid off?

RR: Well you know, back in those days they would lay us off first, lay off the blacks first, you know. Some people, blacks, never got laid off, but I did. It depended on who your manager was, that's the way it went.

CC: What would people do when they got laid off?

RR: Well I worked sometimes in the summer. I babysat, you know, I lived on Bainbridge Island for a while during the summer. I worked for this family, the father was a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Washington. So I'd stay during the summer. Always found other jobs to do.

CC: And then, when would they call you back?

RR: Oh whenever they got around to it. They would.

CC: If you got laid off, how long did it last?

RR: Maybe in a couple of years or so, something like that.

CC: And so how many times did that happen?

RR: I don't remember exactly, it was several times I was laid off.

CC: Did you – when you returned back – did you have your seniority?

RR: I did, yes, Mhm.

CC: And have you ever faced racism at work?

RR: I have, but not really a lot, no, no I've not. I've always got a lot of work, like I said, I worked with younger people and I had no problem dealing with the younger people. There were some older people, you know, that wanted to talk to you like you were a child. I said, "No, you're dealing with the wrong person. You know. I respect you, I respect myself and I expect no less from you."

CC: Were women discriminated against, were they...

RR: I don't think so, not really a lot, no.

CC: And what was your experience like being a machinist, a member of 751?

RR: Oh, it was okay. It was fine, you know, you had to have a job and at least you could go to the union if you had some problems. Oftentimes you didn't get the help you needed to get but, you know, you just kept on working.

CC: Did you ever use your union to get represented?

RR: No, I didn't use it, not at all.

CC: Did you guys ever go on strike?

RR: Many times we went on strike, yes we did. We walked the picket lines, we had a, you know during those days, we had a picket line, we had those barrels, you know, what do you call, for heat and things like that. They'd put wooden barrels. Well these guys put grates on there and we'd bake potatoes and cook hot dogs and, you know, we had all kind of pop and everything. We had a good time.

CC: And well did you walk the picket line?

RR: I did, Uh-huh. We stood out on the picket line. I did that at, it must have been, probably DC or Renton Benaroya. I don't know if I did it at Kent Space Center, not because, you know, everything is locked down over there. Those places you can't get in anyways and you're not allowed on the property.

CC: You say you did it in DC? Like Washington D.C.?

RR: No, no, no, no, Developmental Center.

RR: We referred to it as DC.

CC: And what would you guys do when you guys were out on strike?

RR: We would go out and we'd have certain days we would have to, you know, be there in order to get our pay. And, you know, we would do different things, you know.

CC: Do you remember how long you were out on strike?

RR: No, I do not remember.

CC: But it was a couple of times.

RR: It was several times, yes.

CC: What - do you remember what the strike was for?

RR: For higher wages, I believe.

CC: Were you excited when you won?

RR: Absolutely. We could go back to work, and, you know, live normally.

CC: Did anything change, while you guys were out on strike? Did they ever try to bring in workers to take your work?

RR: They'd done that before, you know, and there was some people who never went on strike, they called 'em, referred to 'em as scabs. They stayed there and they worked. But when they went they were allowed to come into the gates cus' our gates were all...we lived and worked in secure buildings. So you had to come through the gate to pass us and some people would yell at 'em but I did not do that, no.

CC: When you went back to work, then the people that didn't work there, they went back?

RR: Well see most of them worked there, but they just came in to cross the picket line and work. Because some of those people didn't have any means, they're supporting and feeding their families and that's the way it was.

CC: And so you said when you first started out at Boeing, the pay was about 62 cents an hour?

RR: Right.

CC: And the dues?

RR: I don't remember what the dues were; it's been so long ago.

CC: Since you started, was that 19...when did you start?

RR: '53.

CC: Have you seen changes or what kind of changes or improvements have you seen?

RR: Well they have done some changes, you know, and they're a lot more fair than they were way back then, you know.

CC: Like how?

RR: It is not as much segregation as there was back then.

CC: How was it segregated?

RR: Well according to, you know, getting upgrades and things like that sometimes, you know.

CC: When promotions?

RR: Promotions, absolutely.

CC: And how did they decide promotion?

RR: I don't know, I don't know the way they made their decisions at all.

RR: They did what they were told to do.

CC: But probably back then it was a bit more segregated.

RR: It was.

CC: Did they have the different, like, black women working in one area?

RR: Oh, no, no, no, no, we were never segregated like that, oh no, never. I've always worked in the integrated area, I wouldn't want to work anywhere segregated at all, because I didn't come up in the era where I had to face a lot of segregation, no.

CC: And did you guys hang out after, you know.

RR: We hung out, we went everywhere, we went to the different clubs and bars and stuff, you know, we were young, we had a good time.

CC: And did any of the places you guys went, did they have any problems with it?

RR: Oh, no, no, they had no problem with us, no, no, mm-mm.

CC: When you were a member of the union, did you know the stewards and the elected officers?

RR: I did know some stewards, yes.

CC: Did you ever think about becoming a steward?

RR: No, I did not, no. I mean some of those things you have to be a "yes" person and I'm not a "yes" person. If it's not right I'm not saying yes, no, I believe in doing the thing the right way. And you cannot talk me into doing something that's wrong and I know it's wrong, morally wrong, no.

CC: And how were the working conditions?

RR: They weren't bad at all, no. I didn't have any complaints you know. We had to keep our area clean, especially in electronics all the time, you know. When you're finished with your desk you clean your desk in the afternoon and we usually had janitors but we'd always pick up around our area because sometimes the wiring, you'd get pieces of wires and things on the floor and you would clean it up.

CC: Was it safe?

RR: Pardon me?

CC: Was it safe? Like was the equipment light?

RR: Yeah it was safe, yes.

CC: Did anybody ever get injured?

RR: Oh sure, many times I'm sure there were people got injured. You had to be very, very careful when you're working in a factory like that.

CC: Did you ever get injured?

RR: I did. When I was at Renton I was using this gun that was really heavy and I injured my arm and that was like many years ago.

CC: What were you doin'?

RR: Riveting.

RR: And the gun was too heavy and I thought somebody else was on the back panel and they were not and it just jammed my whole arm.

CC: Is riveting a two person job?

RR: It's a two-person job.

CC: Did you get any assistance when you were injured?

RR: Very little, very little. Back in those days, you know, they wouldn't give you very much at all. You had to go through a lot of, you know, hoops to get anything at all.

CC: Do you remember when you hurt your arm?

RR: This was back in 19 – the 50's – way down there somewhere. They sent me to Everett in 1968 and we had a guy from Equal Opportunity. Well there was nothin' equal about him. He did what he was told to do. When I told him I could no longer do that work I had a medical restriction, and he lied and said that he did not know. I said, "You know it's a shame that you were put into this position to treat your own people like this." I says, "You know you have got to reap what you sow. What goes around, comes around, and it might take a while but you're going to get yours eventually." And he did.

When I got laid off and was waiting for a job, I had a friend who was in electronics, one of my friends told him, says, "Tom you know they're really given Ruthie a bad time at Everett."

He called me up and said, "You come down to D.C. tomorrow or East Field, wherever it was, and we'll have a job for you. I went into electronics and never went to Everett before. I was at Everett about a year, but people were extremely prejudiced up there. But I didn't tolerate it. They would put you, like I was on the Safety Committee, and if you found something wrong, you had it corrected, you were out of there. They want you on there, but they don't want you to exercise what you need to do.

CC: How did you get to Everett?

RR: Drove.

RR: We carpooled.

CC: Everett, was much more racist?

RR: It was, back in those days, yes.

CC: Was, were there a lot of black people that worked at Everett?

RR: Tons and tons of black people; all kind of people.

CC: And what were some of the issues that people had?

RR: Well, they're just being unfairly, a lot of 'em unfairly treated, you know. They had to work and work and work and they worked long, long hours and oftentimes you didn't get credit for what you had done, no.

CC: Did anybody ever complain or do anything?

RR: Oh they complained many times. A lot of them went to the union but, you know, it was, in those days it was turned, it was a Boeing Union, Boeing did what they wanted the union guys to do and that's why, that's the way it worked in those days.

CC: When do you think that changed?

RR: Well it changed, you know, a few years down the road they got better and people were demanding more and going and sticking up for each other. That's what I liked about working with the younger people. They would stick up for you. We'd always work together, where the older people did not, you know.

CC: Did you ever stick up for anybody, on the job?

RR: I have done that, sure, Uh-huh.

CC: Do you remember an instance?

RR: No, I don't. No, it's been so long I don't, no.

CC: Did you have a favorite plant that you liked to worked at?

RR: I think I probably would like working at the IsoLab cus' it was close, just five miles from home, and so that was closer. I enjoyed working there.

CC: What would be your least favorite?

RR: Would be Everett. I didn't mind workin' at Renton, Renton that was a nice group of people working there too, so, you know, we had a close-knit group over there.

CC: And which was the plant you were injured at?

RR: That was in Everett.

CC: And did they give you an alternative job or did that put you out of work?

RR: Oh, no, they don't want me to work cus' this guy from Equal Opportunity, Roy Long, he lied and said he didn't know I had a medication restriction. I said, "You're lying, I just came back from medical and that lady told me, nurse told me you had been there. So how do you sit here and lie? Who are you trying to protect?"

And so he doesn't have an answer right now and he said after I got laid off, "I've been looking for you."

I said, "Well, I just live two blocks up the street."

And he, "I've been looking for..."

I said, "I've lived here for 20 years, you have not looked for me." I said, "You need to stop your lying cus' your lies have caught up with you."

CC: So what ended up happening ultimately, what kind of work...did you get assigned a new assignment?

RR: Yeah, I went to, I went to, I think it was Developmental Center, one of the electronics shops.

CC: And how did that come about?

RR: Well cus' I called a supervisor I knew and let him know that what had happened up there, so he said, "I'm getting you out of Everett right now." Cus' they're a bunch of lying people up there.

CC: And what is some of the changes you've seen happen at Boeing since now and when did you retire?

RR: 2003.

CC: Since now and when you retired?

RR: I don't know. I don't come into contact with anybody who works for Boeing now. I work with the Union, you know, so that's all I do.

CC: When you retired in 2003, what were the changes that you noticed from when you started?

RR: Oh there was a lot of changes. People had more opportunities to do, you know, different jobs, then.

CC: Were there more women?

RR: There were lots of women. I didn't work in the shop with lots of black women, there were a few, but sometimes they worked, like, on the north end or the south end of the shop and I worked at the printed circuit cards on the north end. So I really didn't come in contact with them a lot. They were doing a lot of wiring assembly, the heavy duty stuff and I could not do that.

CC: That was after you hurt your...?

RR: Yes, even before it was too heavy for me.

CC: How much did it weigh?

RR: Some of those great big bundles like this, you know, so it's quite heavy. You got to wrestle with those, you know, wires and insert 'em into connectors and whatever, you know.

CC: So it was bigger women whom were doing that?

RR: A lot of them were not big women, no. But they had been accustomed to a little more hard work than I had.

CC: I've seen some pictures, did they have dirt or fumes or...?

RR: No, on your desk, you have solvents on your desk, when you are, like, soldering and things like that. And you have alcohol and Ketone and, oh, I can't remember the other solvents. But then you had to have a fan to keep you from breathing all those solvents. A lot of people become injured, like, lungs...I have a friend now who's on disability from them. She had a heck of a time trying to get something from Boeing because she was breathin' that stuff all the time. So they wouldn't accept responsibility for that. So finally she's on disability now, but I don't know, it sure messed up her life, though.

CC: Did you ever have problems with the fumes?

RR: I did, but I always, sometimes, you know, I always tried to have a fan on my desk to keep the fumes away from me, though.

CC: Was everybody working in those jobs exposed to the fumes?

RR: Oh yes, but they were right on you, they were confined to your desk, you know, and you had the little thing of alcohol, about like that, and maybe some ketone or some other things, I can't remember all those solvents.

CC: Could you get up from your desk?

RR: Oh, of course. Nobody was tied down to their desk. I got up as often as I needed to.

CC: And so you mentioned you work for a Union now?

RR: I do, I work with the Union, yes.

CC: And what do you do?

RR: I am the recording secretary.

CC: How did you get that job?

RR: It was not by choice.

RR: No, no. They needed, the lady that was the prior recording secretary, she retired, and Betty who's a good friend, asked me if I would take that and that's the worst thing I ever said. Cus' I'm not a secretary. So now I have a good friend, Kay, who comes over and does the minutes for me cus' I said, "I've had it" you know, "You get a younger person that can."

Some of those guys have so much stuff, you know, you've seen the Union paper? Okay. So much, so much, many things goes in that paper, you know, I can't keep it all, that stuff. So Kay was kind enough to come over and another lady, Roseanne, would come over and do the minutes.

CC: How long have you been doing that?

RR: At least about five years, probably.

CC: What were you doing before?

RR: I was relaxing right here at home.

CC: As the secretary, how often do you guys meet?

RR: We meet once a month; on the second Monday of every month.

CC: And what kind of things do you guys do?

RR: We have a lunch and we have all kind of guys are really, really, into the Union, heavy, heavy. They go to all of the meetings, they are activists, I mean they are big time activists. I really don't have time to get involved in all those kind of things.

CC: That's now they're doing this?

RR: Now. They're going to Olympia all the time, they're going to places. I cannot get hung up in to all, excuse me, not every day, or every week.

CC: Did they go to Olympia and do all these things back when you had first started out?

RR: Not to my knowledge, no.

CC: Back in the '50's and the '60's?

RR: No, no, no.

CC: What kind of things, was the Union doing then?

RR: Not a lot of anything, no, not to my knowledge.

CC: So you said you took a break, when you got laid off and then came back. How, did you follow up with Boeing when you would get laid off?

RR: I called back. Called and see if jobs were available, you know, you'd have to report in order to get your, what do you call it? Your check. What it's called now? Cus' when you were laid, when you were on leave you'd have to get a check...

CC: Unemployment.

RR: Unemployment. You'd have to go and sign up and say you were looking for these jobs and that jobs in order to get your unemployment check.

CC: And who did the unemployment come from?

RR: Comes from the State, I suppose.

CC: And were there others, did you have other black women that were your friends that you worked with?

RR: I did, yes.

CC: Did they work as long as you?

RR: There were some. I think Katie Burks probably worked longer. She worked at, she retired at Everett. She was a mechanic. Katie loved doing that and she just loved being around people as well, you know, she was a people person. So she enjoyed that.

CC: Were there a lot of black women mechanics?

RR: There were lots, Mhm, yeah.

CC: And were there a lot of black women riveters?

RR: Many, yes.

CC: What other positions?

RR: Oh we did electronics, we did, people did store, work in the stores, and lot of 'em in janitorial. They had 'em in all kind of field, you know. And they have now, now they have, you know, a lot of black engineering women and a lot of black engineers now; great young women.

CC: Were there jobs that they couldn't do back then or they didn't do?

RR: They probably, they didn't do, I don't know.

CC: So you had mentioned another woman, Clara Atkins, can you tell me a little bit about her?

RR: Clara is a wonderful person. She worked very hard for the Union back in the days, you know, women were not recognized. But Clara was not afraid of any of them. She went to places where blacks weren't even known and she just stood up for what she believed in. She had a wonderful spirit.

CC: What did she do?

RR: She just spoke wherever she went, you know. She went to all these conferences and everything, everywhere.

CC: She got to travel a lot.

RR: She traveled a lot. She went to Washington D.C., anywhere there's a conference. Clara, she would, Clara was always there.

CC: Is that with the Union?

RR: With the Union, yes, Mhm, yeah.

CC: And how, do you know how long she worked?

RR: I do not know that, no, no. It was probably in that article of her. It's probably how long she worked in there. I never worked with Clara.

CC: And she's your friend?

RR: No, I just know her.

CC: How long have you known her?

RR: I met Clara, I met her when I was younger, but I hadn't seen her for like 40 years probably. And so it just happened I took her to the Union Hall one day and that's how I really came into contact with her. Tried to get her to come back, but like I said, she doesn't feel very well off and, you know, and so she has to kind of take it easy. She has, quite a few health problems.

RR: She is really a neat lady. She is really wonderful.

CC: And when you retired from Boeing you had mentioned, you've seen a lot of women come in and a lot engineers. Did that make you happy to see the changes over all those years?

RR: Extremely happy and when I retired we had the biggest party in the world for me. The kids at work, they threw, if anybody retired or whatever, they'd throw you a big party and when I talked to the lady that schedules for when you have your big retirement party, she says, "Where would you like to go." I said, "Palisades is my favorite restaurant, I mean can you do this?" And she said, "Yes." I was the first person to ever have a fourth level manager at my retirement. And it was, it was great. Right up on that bluff at Magnolia, we had, my goddaughter from Louisiana came out and we stayed in the Mayflower hotel, and my friends from the south end, they came and we all stayed there and it was time for the Limo to pick us up and take us to the Palisades. We lived it up, we had a wonderful time.

CC: They must have been really appreciative of your many years of service.

RR: Yes. And we were so beautiful. We came in, they were looking for the Render party, and we all had on full-length minks and I said, "That's us", you know. They were shocked to death. And everybody was so elegantly dressed. If I have one of those books next time I see you, I'll show you all those really good pictures that we had. It was a wonderful experience and it was like a second course meal, everybody had a good time... they gave you the vase over there with the flowers in it and this friend of mine did the arrangement. I've got all kind of pictures and I've got everything.

CC: All right. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

University of Washington Tacoma
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Oral History Release Agreement

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UNION WAGE DEMANDS FAIR

(Continued From Page 1)

rates between Boeing employes and workers in other industries. Read this, and you will readily see that our demand for wage increases to bring the average up to 79 cents per hour is extremely modest.

Not unexpected, however, is the counter-proposal of the Boeing company.

They offer 55 cents an hour hiring-in rate. With the new expansion of business based on war contracts, and the expected hiring of many hundreds of new workers, the large percentage of men in the lower wage brackets will bring the average far below what it is even now.

Other points in the company's counter-proposal are even worse. They are aimed at complete company-domination of our Union. On these vicious clauses, the Union's Negotiation Committee answered the company:

"This counter-proposal would have the effect of making our organization a company union, since, among other things, it would have the employes forego basic trade union principles. Even the few points which, upon first reading, might appear acceptable to the Union, such as certain brackets of wages and vacations with pay, are so hemmed in by appending and qualifying paragraphs as to nullify any beneficial effect that might appear to accrue to the employes affected thereby. It appears to the Committee that the few inducements offered are solely for the purpose of diverting the minds of the membership away from the main body of the agreement.

"The only conclusion the Committee was able to reach after reading this document was that the Company was not acting seriously or in good faith."

Therefore, the Union's Negotiation Committee is recommending complete rejection of this counter-proposal submitted by the company.

We naturally expect the employers to meet our demands with every conceivable attack. We will be accused of being "Fifth Columnists," "Communist Trojan Horses," "National Defense Saboteurs, and be plastered with every other imaginable label that might have propaganda value, in an effort to crush us.

Is it true that action taken by our Local to win our justified demands would be "sabotage" of National Defense?

WE ARE NATIONAL DEFENSE!

Simply from the point of view of military defense, to build up an efficient, well-functioning industrial machine of strong morale to produce the defense requirements is but common sense.

It is only the greed of the employers for more and more profits which makes a settlement of our dispute difficult.

We call upon the people of Seattle to consider our case with the above facts in mind, and to judge fairly as to whether our demands should not be met.

There can be but one answer—They ARE fair, they should be met. We expect your support!

BUSINESS AGENT

(Continued from Page 2)

and worked out an order of business mutually acceptable and started clearing up these sore spots which had had our members in a state of confusion for the past twelve months. Out of this agenda the Company recessed one day and drew up another counter-proposal.

After receiving this new proposal we asked for time to study the document, and after reading it we found that we had the privilege of reading the most vicious document, probably, which has ever been presented to a bona fide labor organization. It was very well described by a member of the negotiating board when he said, "I've seen individual yellow dog contracts before, but this is the first time I have ever seen one presented to a mass organization."

This infamous document took away the most basic and fundamental rights for which Local 751 had for many years struggled so hard to get and maintain. Signing such a proposal would have meant signing away our right to call ourselves a democratic labor organization and would move the administration of our Local from its present quarters over to the Boeing Office Building.

A clear and comprehensive report and analysis will be made of this Company proposal at the June 29 meeting, unless we receive a better counter-proposal in the meantime.

Your Business Agent has for some time tried to analyze hysterical references to everything progressive as the "Fifth Column" and I now can submit at least one conclusion: I have my own beliefs as to what I think the so-called Fifth Column is—if one does exist.

However, I have considerably more respect for a corporation which tries to screen wage cuts and the breaking down of established union conditions under the maniacal accusation that all unions are part of the Fifth Column, than I have for a certain few members of our Union in good standing accusing the leadership of the Local of being agents of foreign countries.

These so-called Union Brothers ran for office last fall and were defeated by a membership vote. We now find these so-called Brothers, apparently activated by their acid disappointment, functioning

not as members of organized labor but as direct agents of the Company, with or without pay. They are definitely out to do a job of union wrecking.

Their job is made easier by being given the run of the plants; they are able to pass out petitions for signatures worded in such a manner that if you don't sign you are, according to them, also a member in good standing of the Fifth Column.

They hold small group meetings at lunch time where they work on the newer members who are not acquainted with their anti-union activities, and their willingness to sell their own union down the river to satisfy their own phoney ambitions. This office can only suggest that if in doubt about any rumors or petitions that are being handed you to sign, see your Shop Committeeman; he should be well acquainted with the peculiar types who are willing to sacrifice higher wages and better conditions for their brothers just to be a good boy as far as the boss is concerned.

The accusations that the officers of Local 751 are Communists or Nazis is designed solely for one purpose: to confuse the real issue which is getting a more just share of these huge war profits in the way of wages and better working conditions. They are only interested in creating a lack of confidence in the Union leadership so that the Company can crack down on the rank and file members.

Remember, all you have to do to insure for yourself and your family a better living is to stick solidly together. If we do that, all of our reasonable demands must be met by the Company.

Free Cherries

Married couples may pick cherries Saturday and Sunday, May 29th and 30th at Mr. C. A. Reynolds orchard. The orchard is located across the bridge plant No. 2, through South Park, turn left at first road (Beck Road) and proceed South one mile. Road goes through the orchard. Man and wife must be together and they will be permitted to pick approximately 20 pounds of cherries FREE. Picking will be permitted only on the days mentioned above.

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Do We Bar Negroes?

Attacks have been recently leveled at Local No. 751—unfair and unjust attacks—on the charge that we, as an organization, are opposed to the hiring of Negroes by Boeings.

We wish to state clearly and emphatically that such charges are entirely false and without grounds.

It is true that the Boeing Company does not hire Negroes. But since when has Local 751 had any control over the company's policy in this connection?

It is also true that a clause exists in the constitution of the International Association of Machinists barring Negroes from membership. Would this small but vociferous group which has been loudest in attacking our local have us dis-affiliate with our parent body because of this clause?

For their information, it has been progressive locals like our own that for years have been fighting at the International Conventions of the I. A. M. for the elimination of this clause. It is to be hoped that we may be more successful at the forthcoming convention.

Certainly, of all the trade unions in the city, we feel that to direct attacks against us as proponents of racial discrimination, prejudice or chauvinism, is not only unfair and unjust, but is inspired by certain anti-labor elements to disrupt our union while it is in the midst of serious negotiations with the company.

To the honest and sincere colored workers in Seattle—and there are many of them—we can state that a committee, consisting of Brothers Cliff Stone, chairman; George Simi and Dan Dugan, has been set up to try and find a solution to what we recognize as an important issue.

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... shows Seattle's largest growth, during the past ten years, to have taken place in the SOUTHERN and NORTHERN suburban areas.

The percentage gain in the SOUTHERN suburban area is 96.44 per cent.

The NORTHERN suburbs registered a gain of 84.94 per cent. The trend of growth today in most of our large cities is toward the suburban areas.

In SEATTLE the trend is DEFINITELY to the SOUTHWARD, for the first time in the history of our city.

The large expansion of the Boeing plant, as proposed, should greatly increase the residential development SOUTHWARD.

No large city EVER grows too far away from its PAYROLL district . . . More than 80 per cent of SEATTLE's Industrial Payroll comes from the SOUTHERN part of the city.

The hills and plateaus to the SOUTHWARD offer Seattle's finest potential residential homesites. . . . Good soil . . . splendid view . . . pure air—the South and Southwest prevailing winds blow the city and factory smoke to the NORTHWARD and away from this favored SOUTHERN residential district. PURER AIR means a longer and healthier life.

LAKERIDGE

In all the Southern residential area, we believe, there is no other spot quite so beautiful as LAKE-RIDGE with its superb view of Lake Washington and the MOUNTAINS.

A considerable number of Boeing employes have already built homes in LAKERIDGE (under F. H. A. terms); others have but recently purchased homesites on which they will build. All have taken advantage of our liquidation sale to become owners of large view lots at extremely low prices and on very



—Courtesy, Seattle P-I

easy terms of payment, when desired.

LAKERIDGE adjoins the SOUTHERN city limits on the shore of LAKE WASHINGTON. It is but ten to twelve minutes' drive to Boeing's Plant Number Two. Homebuilders in LAKERIDGE are protected by building and racial restrictions . . . no SHACKS are allowed in LAKERIDGE.

We invite you to drive over to LAKERIDGE soon and secure your VIEW LOT before the liquidation sale has ended. Our REPRESENTATIVE will be found at our office in LAKERIDGE daily and Sunday from 8 o'clock to 9 o'clock P. M. . . . Drive out any evening.

LAKERIDGE INC.

OWNERS. PHONE RA. 4999

P.S.—Population INCREASE IN LAKERIDGE during past 18 months is 636 per cent.

NEGRO LABOR AT BOEINGS

Labor Troubles Tie Up Freighter

Refusal of the "Diamond Cement," a freighter between Seattle and Alaska, to accept a chef-cook, chief steward and two mess boys assigned to them by the Marine union, caused a 24-hour tie-up last week.

The trouble arose when the freighter requisitioned the men to fully man her crew. It is reported that the engineers manning the freighter were willing to accept the cooks, but refused to sail with the mess boys, because they had no separate lavatory. Their refusal caused the Marine union to order the "Diamond Cement" tied up.

Several efforts were made to learn from which department the refusal came to permit race men to sail. Neither the owners nor crew assumed responsibility. However, the boat was released and sailed after having been detained 24 hours.

It was learned that the affair was compromised by the owners paying the men refused employment on account of color, one full month's pay in lieu of their right to demand the assignment allotted them.

Other union men freely criticized the action of the men in surrendering rights so dearly bought.

D. D. Watson Dies Of Heart Attack

With the passing of D. D. Watson, 66-years-old, 6919 Empire Way, death again invades the rank of Seattle's pioneers. Just ten days prior to his death, apparently in the best of health, he was stricken with influenza which affected his heart, causing death.

A native of Ohio, he came to Seattle in 1902 and engaged in the express and transfer business. Later he joined the police department of Seattle, serving 14 years. At the time of his death he was a member of the police department of Renton. It was the Renton department which furnished the escort for his funeral.

Many mourn the passing of the man who practiced the Golden Rule and was always quick to relieve distress.

Last rites were held at the Angelus Mortuary with the Reverends Fountain W. Penick and Judson Swancy officiating. Interment was at Evergreen cemetery.

He is survived by his widow, two sons, and many friends.

Dr. E. J. Brown Endorses Jones

In a signed statement handed to the Northwest Enterprise Wednesday, Dr. Edwin J. Brown, candidate for the city council, issued the following statement:

"My fellow citizens and Americans:

"I entered this campaign for city council with two objectives. First, to drive communism out of the city. Second, to get Seattle out of debt.

"I know these two objectives can be accomplished by the election of Bob Jones. I counsel and request my fellow citizens and Americans to vote for this fine

Boeing Airplane Co-Aeronautical Union Bars Negro Labor From Plant

Carrie E. Selby, Active In Church 30 Years, Passes

Mrs. Carrie E. Selby, 85, died at her home, 2608 E. Valley, Monday, March 4, passing in her sleep during the night. She was born at Claiborne, Ala., October 9, 1855.

An 85 year old woman who has been active in church work for half a century was known as one of the church "mothers."

No church member has a better record of devoted service than Mrs. Selby, the mother of three children. She came to Seattle 30 years ago from Fargo, South Dakota, where she was an active member of a white church. The letter which she brought from the pastor and congregation there was one of her cherished possessions.

One of the most lovable characters connected with the First A.M.E. Church, Mrs. Selby had, in the years as a member, given unselfishly of her time, service, and money. She was said to be one of the church's heaviest contributors. She was active in the laying of the cornerstone of the present edifice, and a memorial window is also credited to her efforts. The stewardess board is the auxiliary with which she was most closely connected during her thirty years of church service here.

Surviving are: one sister, Mrs. Adella Cager of Spokane, Washington; two brothers, Prof. D. H. Kyles of Clarksburg, W. Va., Mr. T. L. Kyles of Trenton, Penn., a son, Rueben W. Miller of Klamath Falls, Ore.; two daughters, Mrs. Georgette Farrel of San Francisco and Mrs. Adella Richards of Seattle.

The Boeing Airplane Company is aided by the Aeronautical Mechanics Union in its discrimination policy, it was learned this week. Proof that the union is un-animously in accord with the Company's policy was established when it was learned that members of the union are required to take the following pledge; "I will not recommend for membership in this union any other than members of the white race." The oath is taken on initiation and repeated at each meeting of local number-751.

Efforts to break down the Boeing Company's discrimination policy were made last October when a young Race men applied for training at the Boeing shops following the launching of a program to train additional men to fill the company's back orders. Apprentices were being paid 55c per hour while training. However, Negroes were told at the plant that the company did not train nor hire Negroes. Paul Fredrickson with whom Hutchen R. Hutchen attempted to discuss the company's discrimination policy said that he would recognize no complaints unless made by letter.

When Hutchen took his story to the union he was told that the Aeronautical Mechanics Union was established years ago and had never accepted Negroes as members.

The Boeing Airplane Company was awarded a contract of \$8,102,892 in September of 1939 by the War Department for bombardment planes and also had at that time a \$300,000 contract to supply the Brazilian Air Corps with training planes.

The Company's unfilled orders as of October 1st amounted to \$26,000,000. To fill these back orders and the new contracts the training school was established, but all efforts to place Negroes at the plant proved unsuccessful.

JUST TO REMIND YOU

By E. I. Robinson



Edith Mary Bown To Be Presented In