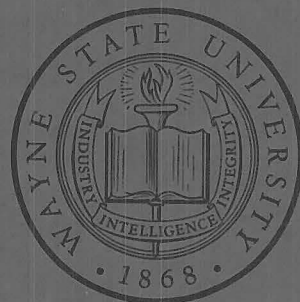


Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs

ORAL INTERVIEW
(ORIGINAL)

MRS. FRANCES ALBRIER

HERBERT HILL, INTERVIEWER
NOVEMBER 3, 1968



Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan



TRANSCRIPTION OF MRS. ALBRIER TAPE

INTERVIEWER: HERBERT HILL

DATE: November 3, 1968
PLACE: Berkeley, California
INTERVIEWER: Herbert Hill
INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Frances Albrier

H: Mrs. Albrier, would you please tell us where you were born, when you were born, and when you first came to Oakland, California?

A: I was born in Mt. Vernon, New York. I left Mt. Vernon, New York, at the age of three. When my mother passed, she gave me to my grandmother, my father's mother, who lived in Tuskegee, Alabama. My grandmother was from Tuskegee, Alabama, years before Booker T. Washington came and was one of the persons who requested that they have a school there for the children. I lived with my grandmother and went through the grammar school on through Tuskegee. I'm an alumni of Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama.

H: In what year were you born, Mrs. Albrier?

A: 1898, September 21.

H: And, when did you first come to California?

A: I came to California when my grandmother passed in 1916. My father had come to California earlier after my mother past. He came back and my sister and I came to California to Berkeley with him.

H: Why did you choose Berkeley?

A: Because my father lived here and I was still a minor and I came to stay with my father and stepmother then.

H: What was the first job you had when you started going to work in Berkeley?

A: Well, I married in Berkeley. And, the first job that I had was with the Pullman Company.

H: Was your husband at the Pullman Company?

A: No, my husband was deceased at the time and I had three children.

H: What year was that? Oh, approximately....

A: I think it was in 1925.

H: In 1925 you had three children, your husband was deceased, and you went to work for the Pullman Company?

A: Yes.

H: In what job? What kind of work did you do?

A: As a maid.

H: As a maid....Was that in their yards here?

A: No, that was on the trains.

H: On the trains....You worked on the trains?

A: Yes. When the Southern Pacific Railroad decided to have maid service on their Pullman trains, on the trains that carried all Pullmans.

H: You worked on an all Pullman train at the Southern Pacific?

A: Yes.

H: And, that was....

A: Well, the Pullman Company used employees that worked on all of the railroad trains at that time.

H: You worked not for the Union Pacific--you worked for the Pullman Company?

A: Pullman Company. The Pullman Company then operated the Pullman cars and that was the service for the Pullman Company. But, we were under the Pullman Company.

H: And how long did you hold that job as a maid for the Pullman Company?

- A: The Pullman Company until 1930, the beginning of the Depression when they felt that they no longer needed maid service--it was quite expensive to keep them on.
- H: So, they fired all the maids?
- A: Yes.
- H: Were all the maids Negro women?
- A: No, they discontinued the maid service. In 1929 the Union Pacific and the Southern Pacific decided that they'd like to have the oriental type train and that was the time that they hired oriental maids.
- H: In 1929?
- A: Yes.
- H: Did they fire the Negro maids?
- A: They discontinued the Negro maids from that train.
- H: From just that one train...the Oberlin...
- A: Yes, the Oberlin Limited...
- H: The Oberlin Limited...
- A: That ran from the Oakland Pier to Chicago.
- H: Was that on the Union Pacific or the Southern Pacific?
- A: Both companies...
- H: Were jointly operated?
- A: Were jointly operated...
- H: And in 1929 they replaced the Negro women with Chinese?
- A: Yes.
- H: Chinese women?
- A: Yes.
- H: Really?

A: Yes.

H: I didn't know that. Were you at all active in the early days of the Brotherhood, of the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

A: I remember them quite well when Mr. Randolph came to lecture in the Bay area and in Oakland. He often came and I knew him quite well. And, Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Charles Baker, often entertained him and I helped her when he did come to Oakland.

H: And, you knew C. E. Dullins?

A: Mr. Dullins, at that time when I became a maid, when I came to Oakland, was the local president at that time. I think he came from Texas here.

H: He was president of the Oakland local of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

A: Yes. The Pullman Company was so against the organization of the maids and the Pullman porters at the time here. They had snoopers to attend the lectures any place where Mr. Randolph spoke to see how many employees were at the lectures.

H: Were you actually a member of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters?

A: Yes, I joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in New Orleans ...

H: In what year?

A: And, they had quite a large office there in New Orleans. The secretary was a lady--I forget her name...

H: Do you recall in what year you joined the Brotherhood?

A: I think it was in 1928.

H: Yes. And what was the last year you worked as a maid for the Pullman Company?

A: 1930.

H: 1930. So, you were there two years. Well, as the Depression occurs, you lost your job with the Pullman Company. And, what happened then?

A: In the meantime, I married one of the men who was an employee at the Southern Pacific, Mr. Willie Albrier, who was.... He was a bartender, but they classified them as club bar attendants because the railroads then would not classify Negro men in the position that they should have been in. Then I became a housewife and was interested in civic organizations. It was then that I worked with the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Auxiliary - Women's Auxiliary. The auxiliary was composed of the wives and sisters, and daughters if they wanted to join, of the men who were employed by railroads.

H: This was an all Negro group?

A: Yes. They were Local 456 Southern Pacific. My husband was a Southern Pacific employee. At that time, all labor was going through a struggle and trying to advance themselves. Not only was Mr. Randolph organizing the Pullman porters and maids during those periods of those years, but the other employees on railroads - the waiters, cooks, waitresses, waiters, bar tenders and miscellaneous help - were being organized.

H: Yes, there were several unions then.

A: Yes.

H: Now, tell me: when did you go to welding school? When did you decide that you would like to be a welder in the war-time ship yards in Oakland?

A: When the war broke out and the ship yards were beginning to be built in Richmond - we had the oldest one already here and that was Moore Ship Yard; it was quite an old ship yard. But, because the ship yards were just beginning to be built to make ships, Mr. Kaiser decided that he was going to make the victory ship. And, he had Kaiser yards 1, 2, 3, and 4; that were out in Richmond at the time. And the call came for.....

H: By the way, that was Richmond, California?

A: Richmond, California, yes.

H: I just wanted you to establish that for the record.

A: The call came for everybody who had time and could - from the government, from President Roosevelt - that we should work in the ship yards to make victory ships which were much needed to take food and everything else to the soldiers that were needed across the seas.

H: As a matter of fact, there was a big wave of shortages at that time, wasn't there?

A: Yes. And the call came through the women's organization that women could participate. After going through a depression for so many years, at the time, everybody was eager to get employment.

H: Now may I talk to you for a moment? I just want to talk.....

RECORDER GOES OFF AND COMES BACK ON LATER

H: In what year did you enter the Central Trades School to study welding for the ship yards?

A: It was in 1942. I don't remember just what month, but I graduated, I mean I got a certificate on finishing a hundred and twenty hours on September 22, 1942.

H: For the record I would like to indicate that I have before me a document entitled, "Vocational Training Record Card; Central Trades School; Oakland, California. This certifies that Frances Albrier has satisfactorily completed vocational training in this school." In the unit shown on the reverse side of this card - it indicates that was for welding, for flat welds and verticle key welds. And it is dated September, 1942, indicates you had 126 hours - this is more than double the required which was

usually 60 hours. It was signed by a school official by the name of W. R. Grace, whose title is "instructor 920-242." It is a form of the Federal Security Agency, U.S. Office of Education, Form 114, U.S. Office of Education, Washington D.C... Well, you fully completed and we have a certificate here indicating that you had more than doubled the required number of hours and that you have been fully certified as a trained welder.. What happened when you applied for a job, Mrs. Albrier?

A: My instructor told me to... He advised me, as a woman, to go to the cleaner ship yards and that would be the Kaiser ship yards in Richmond although Moore was a nice ship yard, but it was an older ship yard and quite cluttered. Women would have to walk over a lot of beams and irons to get where they work. So, he advised me to apply at Richmond, the Kaiser Ship Yards in Richmond. So, I first went to Moore's and passed the test at Moore's and they instructed me to come back the following Monday and go to work. Then, I went to the Richmond Ship Yards and passed the test there with the instructors okaying me as excellent because I'd had so many hours and made such a perfect "B". He sent me then to the employment office at Kaiser Ship Yard No. 1, and there the employment officer...

H: That was also in Richmond?

A: In Richmond. That was still in the ship yards. The officer there said, "Well, we're not employing today because it's the weekend, but, Monday, we start employing again and you come out Monday. But, first call me before you come out." The following Monday, I called him and he said that I'd better not come out today because he didn't think that he could get me on. And I asked him, "Why?" And, he was very reluctant and I said, "Well, now

is it the unions?" And, he said, "Yes." He said, "You have to go through the unions and the unions are not employing Negro women as burners or welders." So, I said, "All right!" Then, I went out to the ship yards and went to the Kaiser office. The secretary there, I told her that I wanted to see the director...(I can't think of his name now). And, she said, "What for?" And, I said, "Because you are going against President Roosevelt's Order 8802."

H: That was the Federal Executive Order establishing the first federal Fair Employment Practices Commission?

A: Yes. At the instigation of Phillip Randolph at that time... She said, "In what way?" And I said, "I have just been denied after having 126 hours of welding on my own time and not being paid when you are now paying women to learn to weld while they are learning, and they're refusing to hire me." And she said, "Wait a minute and I'll see if you can talk to the director." And she said, "You'll have to wait." And I said, "I'll wait all day if it's necessary." So, finally he called and I explained to him. And, he said, "Oh, no, Mrs. Albrier, we're not discriminating; we have many Negro people working." I said, "Yes, ^{as} laborers, but you don't have Negro women or men working as welders and burners in the higher skilled jobs." And, he said, "No, we have to go through the union. We have a contract with all the major unions."

H: Did he tell you what union? with the Boilermaker's Union?

A: Yes, the Boilermaker's Union.

H: The International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and Iron Ship Builders and Helpers of the AFL-CIO?

A: Of America...

H: Yes, that's the Boilermaker's Union...

A: The biggest in California...

H: Right.

A: Yes. So, he said, "I'll send you to a public relations officer, in Ship Yard 2 and you go there and he will take care of you." So, I went to Ship Yard 2 and met the public relations officer and he gave me a slip of paper. And on the paper it said: "Hire Mrs. Albrier." And he said, "Go and give this to Mr. Patton of the Boilermaker's Union in Richmond." And I said to him, "Now you call him because I have been there and they said that they were not hiring Negro women..."

H: Excuse me. You, before going to see the public relations man for the company, you went to the Boilermaker's Union?

A: Yes. Yes.

H: And, what happened there?

A: I went and stood in line behind a great many women: Italian women...

H: All white?

A: All white, and all classes. And, they were being trained. They were going into the training school to learn how to weld. And, they were paying \$15 to join the union. When I got to the window, the clerk said to me, "We have made no... You don't have any representation in the union, so you can't work in the ship yard." At the same time, there were two soldiers--two white university men who had just gone into the service--and they said to her, "You mean you're not going to hire this lady? Is that what we're going to fight for? We're supposed to be fighting for democracy." And, she said, "It's nothing... Nothing has been made for her representation."

H: By that she meant that they just "don't take colored folks."

- A: They didn't take colored in the union. So, she said, "I would suggest that you go to Moore's." And I said, "I don't want to work at Moore's; I want to work at Kaiser." Then I went back to the Ship Yard No. 1 and talked to the director of the yard there. He sent me over to Kaiser Yard No. 2 to see the public relations man. And, he gives me this note to send to Mr. Patton, who was the head of the Union of this local.
- H: Of the Boilermaker's Union....
- A: Boilermaker's Union. Let me see what local this was ... Local No. 513.
- H: (READING) Yes, this is Local No. 513 of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders and Helpers of the AFL-CIO.
- A: I then went back to the union and Mr. Patton wasn't in and I waited for him and handed him the note. Then, he said, "Okay." And, he okayed the note and said, "Go to window No. 7." Well, I had seen these other women with \$15, so I thought that I had to have \$15. So, she made out the registration slip--the regular requirements and questions that you answer. And I handed her the \$15 and she said, "You don't have to pay; you're working on a permit."
- H: Now, by that she meant that you were not being admitted into the union; you were working on a "special" temporary work permit without union membership?
- A: That's right.
- H: The \$15 was the initiation fee for union membership?
- A: Yes.
- H: So, they were going to let you work but they were not going to take you into the union, is that right?
- A: Yes, that's right at that time. Then, it was then that I went on into the

Kaiser Ship Yard No. 1 as a welder. I was quite a figure in the yards with the welding suit on because there had been no Negro women welding.

H: You were the first Negro woman in the Kaiser Ship Yard in Richmond, one of the biggest ship yard producers in the United States Navy during the second World War. You were the first Negro woman in the Kaiser Ship Yard?

A: Yes, as a welder.

H: As a welder. You weren't there tending the wash room or doing janitorial work. You were there as a production welder.

A: That's right.

H: You had no union membership?

A: No. I worked in Kaiser Ship Yard for 4 months. Then I received a letter from... In the meantime the Boilermaker's Union had set up an auxiliary for Negro employees in Richmond...

H: That was a Jim Crow, segregated auxiliary?

A: Yes, the same as they had in Oakland. Because at that time a lot of pressure was put on and they needed people so bad to weld. And people were even coming from the southern states.

H: All right, there was a very acute wave of shortages at that time.

A: Yes.

H: The government was furiously trying to recruit workers.

A: Yes.

H: And the unions' color bar, however, prevented Negro workers from getting these jobs. But, they would let them work without union membership.

A: So, I worked on a permit without paying any union dues or anything for

four months. And, when I became a journeyman, then I received this note from the International Brotherhood of Boilermaker's Local No. 513 saying: "You are hereby notified that arrangements have now been completed for your representation in the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers and it is necessary that you come to this office at once and complete your payments and be initiated as you are not a member until recorded as such on the records of the International. The application fee is \$15. Please attend to this immediately. H. E. Patton, International Representative."

H: Yes and it's dated 1-25-43, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Local 513, 7th and McDonald, Richmond, California.

A: And I was initiated February 13, 1943, and paid the \$15. That was just words because we did not receive all of the benefits that a regular union member received.

H: I hold here a receipt, no. 56306, on the stationery of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Local 513. This to indicate the the receipt of \$15 from Mrs. Frances Albrier, dated 1-28-43. There was no indication that she's being admitted into membership. It is simply the receipt of \$15. Now, the point here is that you were given a permit, but they were now setting up the colored auxiliary?

A: Auxiliary, yes.

H: So that there were now other workers on the job, is that right? Well, they did not.

A: Yes. Yes. But, they had been going to the auxiliary after passing their examination as burners and welders.

H: There was a separate all Negro auxiliary?

A: Yes.

H: That did not have a local union charter?

A: No.

H: But was the auxiliary to Local 513 which was all white? Now I.....

A: Yes. It was there that you went to pay your dues. I refused to go to the Auxiliary to pay the dues. I still paid my dues at the regular local boilermaker's union.

H: May I ask you a question? Did the Auxiliary - the colored auxiliary - did you hold regular membership meetings?

A: No.

H: Did you have a meeting place?

A: They had a meeting place, but there were no meetings.

H: There were no meetings.

A: It was just an office where you paid your monthly union dues. That was four dollars a month.

H: There was a separate office for the colored workers to come?

A: Yes. And it was about six or seven blocks from the Boilermakers.

H: Right. In other words, they didn't want the Negro workers to even come to the "white" office where "white" workers came to pay their dues?

A: Yes, that's right.

H: There was a separate office that they set up just to accept the dues of the colored workers?

A: Yes.

H: But, you had no Negro representatives, you had no meetings, you had no charter from the International? Let me ask you this.....

A: No. We were not included in the insurance that union members had or any of the benefits that the regular union members had.

H: Did the business agent of the Boilermaker's Union, on the job, do anything for you inside the ship yard?

A: No. No. They employed a Rev. Smith. He was then the pastor of the Zion A.M.E. Church at that time and he was the manager of this auxiliary.

H: He was the colored manager?

A: Yes.

H: Now, may I ask you this? (I see some correspondence that you have with various public officials.) Did you ever file a complaint with the Fair Employment Practices Commission against the Boilermaker's Union?

A: They appeased me when I went and forced him to hire me at the time. Like so many representatives, they think if they do something for an individual that kicks up with them, why that will satisfy them and they won't still fight. But, I was interested in all of the other Negro women who were learning to be welders and burners working in Ship Yard no. 1, 2, 3, and 4 and not going down to Moore's. So, at that time, Berkeley High School was giving a course in burning and welding and a great many of my friends and the Federated Club Women were going to Berkeley High School and finishing the required hours and they went to Kaiser's. And, they absolutely refused to take them in because they did not have this auxiliary at the time. So, it was then that they said that they went to the employment... They were directed to go to the state employment office and they went to the state employment office and the state employment office told them, "Well, you can go over to the Boilermaker's Union, but we want to let you know that they're not accepting Negro burners and welders now. And, we don't want to see your feelings hurt or see you being discriminated like that." And,

they advised them not to go.

H: The California State Employment Service told the Negro women who had completed a training program not to go to the Boilermaker's Union because they wouldn't be accepted because of their color and also because their feelings would be hurt?

A: That's right, yes. They came back and told me because they knew I was working as a welder.

H: You were still the only Negro woman in there?

A: Yes. Yes. And, so I was California's State Association for Colored Women's Federated Clubs legislative chairman and I went to the State Employment Office and challenged them on why they did not send these girls to the Boilermakers and let them turn them down and why they did not make a deposition of discrimination to the government. And, so we put them on the spot and we threatened to go to Sacramento, California, and report this. So, they said that they would do that; they would make a deposition of any of the others that came to the government so the government would know.

H: They just were not referring Negro women even though there was this big wave of shortages. They were just not referring Negro women to these jobs because the union wouldn't take them.

A: That's right, because they had so many auxiliaries at that time.

H: Right.

A: It was then that I wrote a letter to the President, Franklin Roosevelt, and told him.....

H: Yes, I think we saw this....

A: And told him about what was going on out here and refusal of them hiring

Negro women and men as burners and welders in the ship yards.

H: Did you ever file a formal complaint with the Federal Fair Employment Practices Commission?

A: I did not. The Fair Employment Practices Commission was not... We didn't have one then. This was before they began.

H: No, it was in existence in 1943.

A: It was?

H: Yes, it started in 1942. Well, I see that....

A: Well, anyway I wrote this letter to the President and told him what was going on and we were being denied employment out here...

H: May I read this into this record, Mrs. Albrier?

A: I received the following letter.

H: Yes. This is on the stationery of the War-Man Power Commission, Office for Emergency Management, Washington, D.C.; chairman Paul V. McNutt, Federal Security Administrator. It is dated March 26, 1943. I have the original before me. It is addressed to Mrs. Frances Albrier, President; East Bay Negro Women Welfare Club; 1621 Oregon; Berkeley, California. (READS):

My Dear Mrs. Albrier:

Your telegram of March 17 addressed to President Roosevelt and relating to difficulties facing Negro workers in the Richmond area has been referred to me for reply. I am discussing this matter with the regional director of the War-Man Power Commission and requesting him to take appropriate action. I should appreciate your communicating directly with him in order that he may be kept informed of developments. Your communications on this regard should be addressed to: Mr. William Hopkins, 242 F _____ Building,

San Francisco, California.

It is signed:

Sincerely yours,

Leo R. Werts
Assistant Executive Director
Field Management
War Man Power Commission

Now what happened after you got this letter?

A: It was then that they set up this auxiliary.

H: It was in response... I want to get the sequence right here now. After you complained about the failure, the refusal, of the State Employment Service to refer Negro women, or Negro men for that matter, to these jobs...

A: Oh, yes, Negroes, men and women.

H: Right. And knowingly the State Employment Service said, "We will not send you out to these jobs because the union won't take you." At that point you protested to the federal government. We may assume that the federal government then indicated some pressure upon the union. And, in response to that, the union did not admit the Negro workers, but they set up a separate "all" Negro auxiliary, made you pay the full dues, but gave you no representation, gave you none of the protections or benefits of union membership--including the insurance, the pension plan, union representation and collective bargaining--they just took your money and set it up as a separate all colored auxiliary?

A: That's right.

H: But, that only after you complained to Washington?

A: That's right.

H: And after you exposed the activity of the California State Employment

Service, is that right?

A: That's right.

H: I see. Now, at this point you were still the only Negro woman?

A: We also had publicity in our paper. Other people wrote also...

H: Now, before I look at that may I ask you: in your opinion, Mrs. Albrier, why did they take you and not the others? Why do you think they took you and not the other women?

A: Well, that seems to be a kind of a way that employers will do.

H: You think it was just tokenism?

A: It was just tokenism. They thought perhaps if they satisfied me they wouldn't have any trouble. That was all that I wanted -- to be employed because I did not say other Negro women to them, I was after them about not employing me.

H: Yes. Now, you told me when we talked before the tape that when you originally went for the job, they told you that they weren't going to hire you. And then you indicated you were going to make a fight, so they then made some special arrangements in your case. But, they were surprised, were they, when after they gave you the job, you continued to fight for the other Negroes?

A: That's right.

H: Do you have any other official correspondence with government agencies that I might put into the record?

A: On that particular...

H: I see you have some other letters here on congressional stationery.

A: This was different...

H: I see that you wrote to a number of congressmen. There's acknowledgements

of letters...

A: No, this was about the boys--the boys that were court-martialed on an ammunition ship which...

H: Oh, I see, this was on another matter?

A: Yes.

H: Is there any other official correspondence from government agencies on the matter of the Boilermakers' racial practices?

A: No, I don't think I have any other...official correspondence.....

H: I see. Now, this is a story in the California Voice, dated September 25, 1942. It says --I quote, (It's from an article by Lewis Campbell, "Our Town," - the California Voice; that's a Negro newspaper: "Negro women are being humiliated and denied work as burners and welders in the Richmond Union, No. 513 of the Boilermakers, because they have no colored women's auxiliary, which is discrimination in itself. This is largely because they have a discriminatory union auxiliary for our men folks."

Did they have a separate Negro auxiliary for the men?

A: No, no.

H: I don't think so.

A: Only at the Moore's.

H: Yes. The writer of this article, Mr. Lewis Campbell, says that he took a course in welding at Central Trades School, passed the test at Moore's Ship Yard, at the Richmond No. 2 Yards, and at the time when he applied, four white women were accepted from the employment office with only 26 hours of welding and even though he had 126 hours.....

A: It was me; I was writing to him.

H: Oh, I see, he's relating... That's not true then....

A: He's relating my story...

H: He's telling your story?

A: Yes.

H: Oh, I see. I thought he was talking about himself. I see. Now at the Moore Ship Yard they already had a colored auxiliary, Oakland Local 681, in Oakland for Moore Ship Yard. But, Richmond Local 513 did not even have a colored auxiliary. It continued to ignore the presence of E. O. 8802. I see, this is an interesting story. But why do you think... In your opinion, Mrs. Albrier, why do you think that the Oakland Local 681 of the Boilermakers had a colored auxiliary and why do you think the Richmond did not?

A: Well, that was due to certain men who knew about the ship building work and the ships going to be built and they went to this local and suggested... After they found out that they would not accept Negroes into the Boilermakers Union, they suggested to set up an auxiliary so Negroes could find employment because at that time, they could not work in the yards.

H: If you didn't belong to the Union, you couldn't work?

A: Yes.

H: If the Union wouldn't admit you, you just couldn't work.

A: Yes. Yes. At that time, they weren't employing many Negroes in the ship yards even as laborers. That was caused by Phillip Randolph going to the President and forcing him to give this Executive Order 8802 and go on the "air" so everybody could hear it and know it.

H: Now, Mrs. Albrier, were you and the other Negro workers satisfied with

having a "Jim Crow" auxiliary? Was that acceptable to you?

A: No, it wasn't acceptable to me!

H: What did you do?

A: Now, I refused to pay my four dollars a month over in the auxiliary. I paid it in the regular local union.

H: You insisted upon entering into the white local hall?

A: In paying it... They accepted it. But, I know that they sent it on over there.

H: Were you the only Negro who went over to the white local?

A: I don't know; I think the others just automatically took it and went over. They hadn't put up the fight that I had. They accepted joining through the auxiliary and paying their dues there.

H: All right, now, you didn't get any of the benefits; you didn't get any collective bargaining rights - that is, you didn't get service by an international representative or some of the grievance - all they did was to give you a work permit to let you work, charged you a \$15 initiation fee, four dollars monthly dues and set up a "Jim Crow" auxiliary.

A: That's right. That's what they did.

H: At any point, did you and the other Negro workers begin to take action to get into the union, and form union membership with all the benefits and protection of the union?

A: No, not at that time. But, later after the war, I understand that several - Mr. Dullins and several of the union men approached the Boilermakers... And throughout the country, that was their attitude. In the Oakland local there were very liberal union men

who did not like this discrimination of workers because of color...

H: Well, you know there was a law suit.

A: ...and they said that they could not do anything because it was an International and they would have to break it down through the International.

H: Well, you know there finally was a law suit, James vs. Marine Ship, that was begun out here. James was a Negro worker who sued... In this case, it went to the federal courts. It involved the Boilermaker's Union and it involved ship yards in this area. So, it wasn't really until the law suit against the Boilermakers in 1944, James vs. Marine Ship... So, you really started the fight to get Negroes into the Boilermakers here. You were the first Negro in. Were you the first Negro woman, or were you the first Negro in the Richmond Yards?

A: I was the first Negro woman in the Richmond Yards that did welding.

H: Did they have any Negro men?

A: No, no, they didn't have any Negro men. They had them in every department except that.

H: They had Negro men doing menial work?

A: No. There were Negro men who were carpenters and all of that type of work.

H: Were they in the union?

A: Their unions, I think.

H: In Moore's?

A: No, in Kaiser's.

H: In Kaiser's in Richmond?

A: Yes. Yes.

H: Did they belong to the Boilermakers?

A: No you see, they belonged to the Carpenter's union.

H: They had private unions?

A: The ship fitters - all of them - they had their unions of their own.

H: For the records, I'd like to indicate that these were craft unions in in the ship yards in those days. These were not industrial unions and each craft had its own union organization. The craft of welding that you were doing was under the jurisdiction of the Boilermakers. So, while there were Negro carpenters and Negroes in other classifications, there were no Negroes in the Boilermakers classifications. So, were you the first Negro, either male or female, to be in that ship yard?

A: Yes, I was the first Negro welder in this ship yard.

H: You were then the first Negro member of the Boilermakers Union in Richmond?

A: Yes. There was one more Negro woman, but she was very fair.

H: She was sort of "passing?"

A: Yes. But, I was the first Negro woman welder and I created quite a stir when they saw me.

H: I bet you did. Now, tell me, how long did you stay in the Boilermakers Union and in the ship yard?

A: I stayed about a year, I think it was a year. (Let's see, what were those dates...) I think it was 1943, 1944 - a little over a year.

H: A little over a year?

A: Yes.

H: And, you stayed in the "Jim Crow" auxiliary?

A: Yes.

H: What happened afterwards, would you tell me, please?

A: I don't know. I quit myself. Then I went into the post office. But, when I left, there were many, many Negroes welding and burning and in all

of the crafts in the ship yards at that time.

H: But, they were still in the segregated auxiliary?

A: Still in the segregated auxiliary... The segregated auxiliary continued until the end of the ship yards.

H: Until the war-time expansion was over?

A: Yes. Yes.

H: Until war production ceased?

A: Yes.

H: So, as far as you know, the Boilermakers Union never integrated the locals?

A: No, not during the war-period years. And, that was the reason why this case came up suing them. Because some of the men - we women didn't intend to stay; we were just helping out the war effort - but the men wanted to keep it as a vocation.

H: They wanted permanent jobs in industry.

A: They wanted permanent jobs in industry afterwards.

H: Tell me, now, in the Oakland-Richmond area, there are ship yards - there's the big naval ship yard here in Oakland - do they employ Negro men?

A: Yes, yes they do now.

H: Are there any Negro men, to your knowledge, who hold full membership in the Boilermakers Union now?

A: There are a few; I don't know how many.

H: Do you know if the segregated auxiliary still exists?

A: No. No, that was abolished.

H: When was it abolished, roughly?

A: I think about a year after the war was over. It was discontinued.

H: That was a result of direct court action. That was the result of James vs. Marine Ship.

A: Yes.

H: But, now there are Negro men and women who work in the ship yards of Oakland and Richmond?

A: I don't know about the women, but there are men. I don't think that they employ women any more.

H: Yes, I think you're right.

A: The women were an emergency for the war.

H: Well, as you look back through the years, how do you feel about the fact that you made plants open up jobs to Negroes? You were an early pioneer in that fight. How do you feel about it now as you look back?

A: Well, as I look back now, I see the results of being militant and fighting for something that you really deserve as a citizen.

H: Did you get help from anybody in the community? Did the NAACP help you? Did the federated women's clubs help you? Who helped you in Oakland?

A: ...the federated women's clubs, and then we had another club of women. And, at that time, I didn't go to the NAACP because I know that they were in the fight also. You see notices on the letters- I spoke of the club women who were backing us because we happen to be women. And, I knew of the women who were being discriminated against, so I pulled in the women organizations on that.

H: All right.

A: But, if we needed more backing, we would have gotten the NAACP and maybe

some of the other unions.

H: Were there any men who helped you? Did C.L. Dullins help you? Did any of the Negro trade unionists help you at the time? Did anybody from the Brotherhood of Sleeping Porters advise you?

A: Mr. Dullins knew about it and he encouraged us to fight and to go to see what could be done because he was having his problems with his union at that time.

H: So, Dullins tried to organize the Brotherhood then?

A: Yes. At that time, there weren't many Negroes in any of the unions because we were having fights before the war through our women's organization. Even carpenters were not admitted into the unions. They would have one or two and say, "Oh, we have Negroes." And the quota was two or three and that was all. And, that was the policy of the many craft unions at that time.

H: Did you think it's changed then?

A: Most of the men at that time, if they didn't work on the railroads, they were longshoremen.

H: There were really dirty jobs for Negroes here - on the railroads, as longshoremen, dock workers.

A: Yes, they weren't connected with any union. Of course, there were other men who did craft work, but they did it on their own.

H: Yes, they weren't union members.

A: They weren't union members.

H: Do you think that the situation has changed now?

A: Oh, it's changed immensely. I'm glad to live to see the day that it's changed and that people are taken. I don't think that it's as open now as it should be because I hear of unions who still have the

policy of a quota. And, if they...

H: If they take colored folks in at all...

A: Yes. Yes. But, I think that the international unions, CIO and AFL, men like Walter Reuther and them, are breaking down discrimination with the rank and file, through education. It took a great deal of education. Like FEPC, it took us 20 years to get a FEPC in this state.

H: Yes. You think that the FEPC in the state of California has done very much?

A: Yes. I think it's done quite a bit to alleviate unemployment.

END OF TAPE