

BlaggBen1

Video 1

Sun, 4/17 3:40PM • 17:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Shipyards, portsmouth, high school, hired, school, kids, favorite, aircraft carrier, people, middle school, tough, parents, elementary school, years, life, bicycles, groups, downtown, day, transition

Interview Particulars

Date:	March 16, 2022, Wednesday
Time:	11:06 AM – 12:25 PM
Location:	IC Norcom High School TV Production Set
Interviewee:	Benjamin Blagg
Interviewer:	Robert Edwards
Camera:	Jasmine Painter
Instructor:	Jasmine Painter

00:00

I don't need to look into the camera while I'm answering the questions I look at you. Okay, either way

Interviewer 00:13

Good morning and thank you for participating in the Oral History Project. I am _____ and today I'll be asking you about your life story from childhood to adulthood, your Shipyards career and lastly life after retirement. Could you please tell us when and where you were born?

00:27

Portsmouth, Virginia, January of 1985.

Interviewer 00:31

What was life like in Portsmouth at that time?

00:34

At that time, it wasn't quite as busy as it is now. The cities have really grown up around Portsmouth in Portsmouth that itself is trying to grow up. It was quiet for the most part. Kids

riding bikes all over the place. You kind of you know, had a little feeling of security when you were riding around. Just a lot of kids out, out and about during the day. It was a nice

Interviewer 00:58

How as life like having two parents who worked for the Shipyard.?

01:02

Um, it was it was good. But there were times where it got a little bit difficult because they would both end up having to work long shifts on the same day. There were times where we had to go stay with family members so they could, you know, cover the extra work for the Shipyard and things like that. And at the same time, it was nice because when we had holidays just like you have holidays now in school, you know, they were off work so we were able to go and do things as a family. So it may made things very nice having, you know, both my parents, you know, together and also working in the Shipyard. It made for me for things being really nice.

Interviewer 01:40

Which part of town did you grow up in?

01:43

I grew up in Park Manor, closer to Wilson, well I guess now it's Manor high school. So I grew up right over there off of Elmhurst back in Park Manor.

Interviewer 01:54

What was the neighborhood like during the time?

01:56

Back then there was a lot of kids. A lot more kids and I see now. I still live in the same general area. But there were there were kids all the time. Any given time of day, you'd see kids riding bicycles back and forth up and down the street, you know. I was always one of the older kids so we'd be out there, you know, playing football on the streets. The lady across the street, she had a big open front yard and we'd go play tackle football in her front yard. It was just nice. You know, there was, you know, everybody felt comfortable. Doors were unlocked all the time. You know, your neighbors knew who you were and we used to go play back behind the neighbor's houses and stuff like that, you know. They had marshland, more kind of a ditch area, but it was just like, you know, just open area and just we were kids and we would go back there and play. It was just it was a real it was a different time than what kind of what you see now. Yeah.

Interviewer 02:50

What were your favorite places to go as a kid?

02:54

When I was a kid, my favorite places to go. Portsmouth City Park. There's a little bridge over there next to the cemetery. We would go over there and try to catch tadpoles and little hermit crabs that are down there. Fidler crabs. Yeah, so we will go there and play all the time. And then there is a little church right there. There's a hill right in front of it. And we used to set up, not myself personally, but myself another group of kids. We'd meet out there and we'd BMX. They'd set up ramps and stuff. We would jump the hills and all that and then also the train trestle next to Simonsdale Elementary School that's now fenced off and you're not technically supposed to go there anymore. That was that was where I went fishing all the time when I was a kid catching crab pots, bicycles. Every now and then a fish. It was fun.

Interviewer 03:48

Could you tell us what you remember about elementary school and then middle school?

03:53

What do I remember about it? Okay, so back when I was going to school, so they had kindergarten through third grade at Simonsdale Elementary School and that was it. So I did three years there. I was a little bit of a troublemaker, is the best way to put it. I was just full of energy and I was ahead of everybody when it came to reading and math and everything so I was very bored in school so I got in trouble a lot. But that was just because of that and as I progressed along they started getting me into the the advanced classes where you went to other schools and got with the advanced students in those schools and worked together on different things to kind of test your brain power and stuff. So once I got into third through fifth grade, I was going to Olive Branch at that time that's all they had there was third, fourth and fifth grade and that's when they would start taking us from there over to what was I think Hunt-Mapp Middle School. Might still be there? They will take us to Hump-Mapp Middle School. I think that's still the name of that school but we will go there and and do the same thing. You know the advanced students we would go there and just kind of get together and challenge ourselves on that stuff. So it was it was definitely different because everything was broke up kindergarten through third, then you went, sorry, kindergarten through second, then third through fifth, then you had sixth, seventh and eighth grade for middle school, and then you went to high school. So I actually went to four different schools going through.

Interviewer 05:20

What was high school like for you?

05:23

High school? High school was a a interesting transition. When, you know, when you come in as a freshman, there's a lot of us, probably about three times what actually ends up graduating

after four years, which is a crazy number to think about in the end. I think we came in at around 600 or so in our class. And when we graduated, I think it was about 280. So you know, you see the numbers kind of dwindle out over time, people move on to different things, parents take other jobs. So they go other places, kids transfer to private schools, things like that. But the transition was, it was very interesting, because, you know, going from elementary school at Simonsdale and Olive Branch, then I went to Waters Middle School, which was a huge transition, because I went from like an 80-90% white school, to an 80-90% black school. And I wasn't welcomed as much, you know, going to go into those schools. So it was a tough transition from that at that point. So that sixth, seventh and eighth grade timeframe, you know, it really got me up, built me up into, you know, a tougher person, I guess I should, is the best way to put it. You know, you get tough mentally, then physically just, you mature, and then I was a little bit more prepared for going to high school. When I went to Wilson, I believe it was two years, two years after the so-called riots of Wilson High School when they brought Cradock High School, Wilson High School and Manor High School all into one school. And there was a particular day, I know, I remember it, because I've heard by on a school bus on the way to middle school, that they had the whole area blocked by police everywhere and everything. And it was there was a it wasn't a real riot. That's what it was portrayed on the news. But it was basically the different groups from each one of those high schools. It was their first year all coming together and being in the same school which back then they were all rivals. So there was this, it was unfortunate incident. But there was a big, big fight going on between all those different groups all happened at one time. So when I got there two years later, that rift was still there a little bit, but because I didn't know anything about those high schools, it wasn't as bad. But there was still a little bit of separation and things like that. You know, white people kind of did what we did, you know. Black people kind of did what they did. It was it was tough to kind of get everybody intermingled with each other at that time. It was not racism, per se, it was just you know who you associated with kind of thing. But you know, with me playing on the football team, and playing all the sports that I did, I was completely interment intermingled with everybody, so I didn't have any parts of like any kind of this I do this and you're that so you do that I was. I had I had a great time in high school because I was introduced to a lot of people and had a lot of opportunities. I did as many of the after-school activities I could. Sports. I lettered in every sport except volleyball and baseball. And it was, I had a really good time in high school. It was it was a great time.

Interviewer 08:38

Did you go to any local Portsmouth events?

08:42

What was that?

Interviewer 08:43

Can you remember attending any local Portsmouth events?

08:46

Local Portsmouth events? Yes. Well, one one particular. I mean, obviously every year they do the fireworks downtown between Portsmouth and Norfolk. But they also used to do, it was a little more pronounced back then. But when they had Harbor Fest, Portsmouth had, we would have Port Fest on our side and they had Harbor Fest on the Waterside. Port, Waterside was always a little bit bigger than the Portsmouth side, but that was always just a fun event to see the live music, you know, local vendors and stuff down there. Just everybody out having a good time. And really, and all the festivals downtown you know, especially because in high school and stuff I was in the vocal groups and stuff like that as well. So performing arts downtown, you know, for the Christmas festivals and just some of the different holidays we would go down and perform for the for the different parades and things that they would have downtown. It was always a good time.

Interviewer 09:55

What were some of your favorite memories about your time living in Portsmouth?

09:55

Favorite memories about living in Portsmouth. I mean, I guess it's just if you, once you've been here. So background, my family wasn't, my parents weren't from here. So we had no family here, really other than extended family. So my favorite thing about Portsmouth has been establishing a footprint, you know, gaining friends, you know, and, you know, expanding our family here. So we're now starting to have multiple generations here as well. But really, that's been like my favorite thing, which is really, you know, you live here, once you've lived here for a while, you start to get to know more people, not just you know, the people you go to you went to school with, but, you know, you start seeing the same people in different places. And you're like, hey, I remember you. And you know, you stop and you have a conversation, and things like that. And that's really like, my favorite thing about, about being in being from the City.

Interviewer 10:45

What are some of your strongest memories about your family life being involved in the Shipyard?

10:57

So favorite memories. Favorite memory, honestly, was how upset my parents got when I would get detention from school when they had to figure out who would get off of work to come get me. I know, that's not a positive thing. But, when that happened, to me, it was funny, because I

was always curious who was coming to get me and what was going to happen when they got there. But, realistically, you know, my favorite memory of all time was at the Shipyard they have this thing every year, they haven't done it last couple of years due to COVID. But Family Day. Back then they had an aircraft carrier named a USS America. And for this particular family day, they were allowed to take family on to that aircraft carrier, and it actually went out into the bay and actually drove around. We were allowed to be on a ship while it went underway. They launched jets and helicopters, you know, we got to see how they use the elevators on the side of the the aircraft carrier and it's before I ever knew anything about what I do now. You know, that was that was a very cool thing. And they've never done it since then. That was the one and only time that I've ever heard of them doing it. But that was probably my best memory ever.

Interviewer 12:15

Before getting hired, what was your impression of the Shipyard?

12:21

My impression of the Shipyard before I got hired, there was probably that it wasn't what I wanted to do. It wasn't where I wanted to work. I saw my parents doing it. You know, saw how tired they were at the end of the day because you know the physical aspect of what they had to do. The smell. Not that, not body odor, but just the smell of steel. It has this smell that you just want you around it, you know, that smell and it stands out to you. You know, so I knew what that what that was like. So I had I had no desire. And actually two years before I actually started working in the Shipyard I got offered a position and I didn't want to tell my dad that I turned it down. You know, I didn't take it. I didn't want to do that I wanted to do my thing. I was trying to be an entrepreneur, and everything like that. I had no desire to work in a Shipyard. But in the end, you know, when I finally did take the position to take a position in the Shipyard it's been life changing. The money is more than I ever thought that I would make by myself. So it's been it's been good since then. But it was it was tough to swallow. At first. I didn't want to do it. My parents did. I didn't want to work at the same place they did. I'd been inside the Shipyard to get my parents from work and stuff like that. But yeah, that wasn't what I wanted to do. But in the end, it's actually it was better than I thought it was going to be. For sure.

Interviewer 13:45

How much were they paying at the time and did that encourage you to apply?

13:49

At the time when I first got hired, it was \$11.17 an hour. And um, that was that was the starting rate for an Apprentice coming in with no knowledge, no background. At the time I was doing landscaping, not cutting grass, but actually, you know, building flower beds in people's yards, new homes, putting you know trees and plants around their house and stuff like that. And I was

making. I was bouncing around back and forth trying to make as much money as I could. But at the time I was making about \$9.50 an hour. So that was you know, a \$2, almost \$2 increase and not having any skills or abilities or knowledge of at all of what I was getting into. And actually right before I got hired, I got a raise. We get these cost of living increases every year and I actually got a 30 cent raise before I came in. So when I actually first day on the job I was making \$11.47 an hour. And that was 14 years ago and now I'm making \$40 an hour. Yeah. I never never thought I'd make this kind of money my life. Yeah

Interviewer 15:00

How did you get accepted into the program?

15:04

I got accepted. I already had some college background. So I had some some classes and things that helped, you know. Ssome of the positions that they when they hire in, not so much the Apprenticeship but direct hires, they want you to have some sort of a background or degree. It's not a requirement at all, especially for the Apprenticeship. Literally hire people straight out of high school sometimes. You know, that doesn't mean that you need to not go to college or anything like that. Not encouraging that at all. But definitely do you don't need...I trying to figure out... Ask me the question one more time, because I started going on a different route for a second.

Interviewer 15:43

How did you get accepted into the program?

15:45

Okay, so I got accepted, because they do an interview. That's where I was trying to get back to. Sorry. They do an interview process. And when you come to that interview, there's a panel of people. It can be anywhere from six to 15 or more. When I did it, there was 12, a 12-person panel. And it's representatives from each of the groups that are actually hiring at the time. And they each ask you a question. You answer it to the best of your ability. And at that point, you know, they're looking to see how nervous you are about what what they're asking you and stuff like that, and really just kind of feel you out as a person as a human being. And from that point, you know, if you've already been accepted to the interview, your resume was already accepted in the first place. So then it's just a matter of, you know, did you answer the questions to a point where they feel like you could, you know, help them out inside the Shipyard in their different branches

Interviewer 16:44

So I know initially you said you turned down the first offer. My next question was gonna say, what made you reapply two years later?

16:58

Okay.

Interviewer 16:59

What made you reapply again, two years later.

17:03

So two years later, the business that I was trying to start on the outside, it was fledgling, it wasn't working out. I wasn't making

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Video 2

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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Shipyards, ships, weld, supervisor, inspections, play, work, same thing, months, defect, day, inspector, ingrained, people, shop, magnetic particle, travel, aircraft carrier, years, job

00:00

as much money as I thought I was going to be making, I was trying to start a landscaping business on the outside, but it wasn't here. There was too much competition here. So I was trying to actually start a business up in Tappahannock, where there was no buddy out there doing that yet. And my business partner, I couldn't get him to go out and do stuff. And it's two and a half hours away, and I couldn't be there every day to do stuff. I was going to every weekend already. So it just didn't work out. And I was tired of going to TCC and, you know, doing this, the school and stuff and didn't really have a, I didn't have a direction. Mentally, I didn't know. Everything I thought I wanted to do, I really didn't. Once I started going into the school, going to school specific classes for that. Some of the stuff. My aspirations just, it didn't line up with what I thought it was going to be. So I didn't know where I wanted to go. So, you know, once the business didn't work on the outside, I decided at that point in time that you know, I need to do something, you know, solid with my life. And, you know, so I reapplied to the Shipyards and no luckily got a job offer for a job.

Interviewer 01:05

How long did it take you to start?

01:08

The whole process takes just under a year. From the time that you put in your application to just get an interview that took about two to three months before you heard anything from that. Because it was October. Got an invite for interview in December. And I think the interview was actually in January. Sometime in February, they did the actual selections for the people that they wanted for their groups, and then they would send you or they would actually call you and offer you a job on the phone. And then after that it was about another ... I started in August, so about six months from that point to get on boarded.

Interviewer 01:51

Could you describe the first job you ever had at the Shipyard?

01:54

First job is where I'm currently a supervisor of so it's. I got in as a quality assurance specialist, specifically in the field of non-destructive testing. So basically what that entails is I would go to the different ships that needed inspections, not always in the ship, sometimes it was in the shop, but they were parts for a specific ship. And the other trades, they would perform their work where they would, they would build the structure or put the pieces back together or just fix something that's already in place. And basically, my job was to go behind welders after they welded everything up and got it back into a solid mental state or did the repairs to bring things back up to require specification. We go behind them and perform a non-destructive test on it, which could be anything from just a visual inspection to a liquid penetrant inspection where we're putting a dye on there and look for it to bleed back out. When we after we cleaned the part off at the dye comes back out that means there could be something wrong with it. We also did magnetic particle testing, or basically we take a magnet and energize it, or copper coils energize it basically turns into a magnet and we throw iron particles on it. And if they align, if there's any kind of defect in that plate or where they did the weld, the magnetic particles will align and that'll show us that there's a defect and they'd have to you know, excavate that out and repair it. We also do radiography, so same kind of X rays you get if you break a bone or something like that, they do X rays on steel components and stuff on the ships and also in our shop. We do eddy current which is essentially using, I don't want to say this wrong because it's not my specialty. But they basically they're able to do the same thing that a magnetic particle test does but not having to throw all the powder and everything like that. They're basically they can look at a weld and if there's any kind of a defect there their tools will show that. And in my specific background was ultrasonic testing. So like ultrasounds that you get for babies and stuff like that or any other kinds of things going on with you. I do the same thing but I'm looking at steel. So I actually shoot sound waves into steel looking for you know

the thickness of it. I can check to see how thick something is without ever haven't been able to see the other side of it. And I can also use sound waves and shoot it through the piece and I can look at the entire volume of the weld and determine if there's any kind of defects any kinds of lack of fusion or things like that whenever putting the pieces together that they did wrong during the process. So I would, on any given day, I could work on any ship from here to Little Creek to Norfolk Naval Base, any any of those locations on any given day. I could be on any any different kind of ship from submarine to aircraft carrier to frigates and destroyers to the large landing craft. I would, any given day, I could have worked on any of those ships.

Interviewer 05:14

Were you nervous when you first started?

05:17

When I first started? A little bit. I was nervous until my, well, I will say coming into work the first day. Yes, I was definitely nervous. After I got there, the first day, I realized that the Shipyard has a lot of my old friends from school that I hadn't seen since elementary school and stuff like that. Reconnected with people that actually worked in my current code that were already working. There, so nervous at first when I first got in, but then you get there and you realize, like, this isn't that bad. My version of it, what how I think of it now is like, at least the worker aspect of it is it's almost like a big high school inside of there. Granted, we're all responsible for our craft our trade, and knowing our you know, our theory behind everything that we're doing. But ultimately, it's it's, we're, we're a family. We're a bunch of people that work together, we're all working towards the same common goal. But what's important to you, you know, needs to be important to me too, because we got to work together. And that, and that really helps build a bond amongst all of us. There's people that you never thought that you were, that you might not have known or might have known back in high school and middle school, you might not have got along with them. And you didn't really have a good reason why, you know, but then you see this person at work, where you're working now. This is your career, this isn't just, you know, I'm here for a week, and then you know, I might find something else. This is a career now. So, you know, you see these people, you talk to these people, and then you find out you actually had things in common. You never, never realized it when you were younger, because you put these these barriers up for no reason. And then you kind of, so it breaks all those barriers down from high school. And now we gotta high school in the Shipyard essentially. Have a bunch of friends that all work together and we're all working towards the same, you know, common goal of trying to get these ships back out.

Interviewer 07:10

What other jobs and duties have you had at the Shipyard?

07:12

I've been in the same code since I got there. So, you know, I started off as just regular Apprentice. When I went through the Apprenticeship, we actually had to go to school at night and everything like that. So it was a different aspect, I was actually able to get an associates degree. Now they actually go to school during the day during the regular workday. So you don't actually report to work you report at TCC. But you don't get a degree anymore through that program. I was one of the last classes that was afforded the opportunity. So I got an Associates of Applied Sciences through the Apprenticeship program, you know. Graduated after four years, or three and a half. I graduated early. From that, you know, spent about six or seven years now about six years as a, you know, Apprentice and inspector and then I got to work leader, which still had to do the same functions as an inspector, but now I get to do some of the more the managerial aspect of it. And I did that for two years. And then I made it then I got supervisor. And since then, you know, I've moved around to different projects. But I started off as a supervisor actually, what we call the waterfront, which is where all the ships are at when we're working on. So I was a supervisor actually on the waterfront assigned to a specific boat and, you know, assigning work to my inspectors and getting their training and stuff. And now I got moved to a new position. About two and a half years ago. I'm now the the UT supervisor so ultrasonic testing supervisor. So specifically for volumetric inspections, like I was telling you about inspecting welds shooting sound through and actually looking at a weld volume. And I'm also the supervisor for all of our off yards stuff. So everything that we do at BAE that's associated with Norfolk Naval Shipyard, same thing with NASSCO which used to be Metro and then everything at Norfolk Naval base and Little Creek any of those bases that you know work comes in. That's also that comes to me and I have a group of guys that you know, we cover that work as well. So I've been in 135 for 14 years in August.

Interviewer 09:28

What was your most project a most memorable project at the Shipyard?

09:33

My most memorable project at the Shipyard. So I kind of had two. So my most memorable one was working on the Philadelphia. That was a actually a boat that we were deactivating. Basically making it so the power playing on it no longer functions, you know and making it safe to get towed. Uh, wherever it went, I think it went to Puget Sound over in Washington. And they actually stored it there, I believe. But it was interesting because a lot of the requirements, the strict requirements disappear. So and that was my first time getting to lead a project. And I wasn't even a work leader. I was just a newly graduated Apprentice, you know, fresh inspector. And now I'm actually running a project. And then to go hand in hand with that my, my second one that's kind of goes hand in hand with that was when I actually went to Japan. I covered a aircraft carrier that we had deployed out there at a time. I was out there for almost four months. And that was, that was an eye opener, because it was a completely

different culture being ingrained and with the Japanese living in Yokohama, working in Yokuska, which is where the where the base is over there. So that was actually one of my favorites, because I got ingrained with another shipyard, which is Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. They actually owned the work and we were just integrated. I was the only inspector from our yard that went there, but I was integrated into their group and worked hand in hand with them. So I got to see how they performed the same inspections that I've already been trained to do. They do the same thing, but slightly different. So it was, it was a very fun experience to work there and see how they do that.

Interviewer 11:22

Can you remember any difficulties at the Shipyard and how you overcame them?

11:27

Difficulties in the Shipyard that I've dealt with was a little bit of my persona, how I portray myself in the Shipyard when I came in. I was a little rough around the edges. You know, nobody's perfect, but, you know, I was I started making more money than I had in a long time and I had this, you know, I was deemed as a problem child when I got there too, and it was, it was not because I was a problem child, it was because I was bored. You know, when you come in, you got to go through months of training to get qualified to even be able to do any work. So I couldn't do anything. So getting over that, that stigma that I was going to be this kind of person, when I got there, it took me, you know, a few years, you know, pretty much till I got out of the Apprenticeship to really prove myself that, you know, I wasn't that kind of person. And as a supervisor, you know, there's always, always something that's going to happen, you know, especially on the on the work itself. And dealing with people. Every person is different. So I got a group of people when I got. My favorite saying is, you know, "I can treat you all fairly, but I can't treat you all equally", you know. You're not the same person. Your needs can be different than this person's needs. And then that person needs a little bit of, same thing you got but more like something else. So really trying to find that balance. That's a challenge every every single day when you have people that work for you and you're in management.

Interviewer 12:55

Any other Shipyard memories or stories you wish to share?

12:59

So I can go back to Japan. So one thing that Japan did for me being out there was I actually met my wife. She's not Japanese, though, she's Brazilian. So that afforded me the opportunity to travel the world and be you know, be in a completely different environment. And, you know, meet somebody that had a completely different mentality. She's not from Virginia. She had never been to the United States. You know, she wasn't ingrained in all of the, you know, the mentalities that we've built here in our own culture. So it was, you know, it was a breath of

fresh air. And, you know, I've traveled a lot, you know, up and down the East Coast. I've been to Charleston and Florida. I've been to Washington, I've been to New Hampshire and Maine I got sent to Houston> Had opportunity to go to the UK which ended up not happening. But it's I've traveled over 20 times in my 14 years anywhere from you know, two weeks to four months at a time. So it does take it does take a toll if you have a family and stuff like that, you know, the travel can. But you have option you don't have to travel I chose to travel because I wanted to see the world I wanted to see different things but that's definitely like one of my favorite things about working here is being able to do that.

Interviewer 14:24

Can you tell us about the sports teams at the Shipyard?

14:29

At the Shipyard specifically or in general?

Interviewer 14:32

At the Shipyard.

14:34

Okay. So so at the okay so at the Shipyard when I first came in the different shops and codes we have a softball league and at that time when I first got in it was a lot more separated. If you worked in the welding shop you played on the welding softball team. If you worked in a you know the pipe fitter shop you played on a pipe fitters team. If you worked in the non destructive testing groups you played on the non-destructive testing teams. So when I came in that was that was like a battle for bragging rights inside the Shipyard. So it was, it was a lot of fun. You know, still, you know, a bunch of friends getting together to play ball. But you know, if you play any sports at all, you know, it's gonna be competitive, there's always going to be that trash talk and stuff. But it was always so much fun. You know, doing that. They have other other leagues and things. I did play in the Tennis Association that they had for one year. But the biggest one well, you know, I did softball, you know. I played on the team for for three years and then ended up taking over the team and ran it for 10. Almost, almost 10 years,. It was nine years. The 10th one COVID hit so we stopped playing. So but yeah, but when I took over the team I we started getting rid of the stigma of you can only play for the group that you worked for. You know, I ended up taking the team from being reworked code 135 softball, I turned our team into... I changed our team name to Sandlot or a bunch of guys that just want to get together and play ball and have a good time. You know, I had people from not just my group, but you know, I'd have some pipe fitter guys, I had some some rigging guys, and stuff like that we all

just played together because we had we wanted to play and we did we wanted to get rid of that stigma of you can only play for us if you work for us.

Interviewer 16:22

How was the Holiday parties?

16:24

Holiday parties? Ooooo, Shipyard shut down. That is the thing in downtown. Every every year that's the day before Christmas Eve. So it's always the 23rd almost always the 23rd unless that falls on a weekend. But it is, it gets a little exciting. Back when when I first came into the Shipyard and 2008 2009 they actually had more like the different groups would rent out facilities to actually have their own little Christmas holiday parties. But that's kind of dispersed. They don't do that quite as much, at least not that I'm aware of. So now it's more a conglomerate. Everybody comes together

BlaggBen3

Video 3

Sun, 4/17 3:43PM • 0:34

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

fitter, pipe fitters, associate, ship, common goal, work, welders

00:00

together. You know it kind of like I said that stigma of you know, I work with this group and that's only a group I can associate with. That's gone away over the last 14 years since I've been there. And now we're more friends. Everybody works with each other. We're all working towards the same common goal. It's not I'm this and that's all I am. You know, I can't associate with you 135 guys because I'm a ship fitter. That doesn't exist anymore. Now the ship fitters in the pipe fitters and the welders and the inspectors that are going behind those guys.

00:30

FIRE DRILL

BlaggBen4

Video 4

Sun, 4/17 3:39PM • 3:15

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Shipyard, groups, work, talk, intermingle, disinfectant, paper towel, wipe, nostril, mandated, anymore, nose, portsmouth, towels, reserve, holiday parties, dryers, specific, year, parents

00:00

I, can I, can I just start over. If you want, that'd be easier because I had gotten to the point where I was talking about the stigma of the different groups only being only hanging out with that one group, but

Interviewer 00:10

I guess I'll rephrase it. So being that your parents worked for the Shipyard now you're there as an adult, like how were the holiday parties back then compared to now and things like that.

00:21

So from what I remember from what my parents were doing the Holiday Party specifically Christmas shutdown that we have every year at the Shipyard they had specific parties for the specific groups within the Shipyard. They would reserve locations. The castle, downtown Portsmouth or the back rooms at Roger Brown's and things like that. They would reserve that for their specific groups. They would eventually work their way out to mingle with other groups. And when I first came in, it was kind of the same way. There were still those those groups that went to their specific locations and a lot of those people wouldn't come and hang out with everybody else. I've been there you know 14 years now and since then I'd really don't see those those group events so much anymore. Everybody kind of goes out - I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing - but everybody goes out. We intermingle with each other. It's more of a, you know, it's more of a friendly vibe. Everybody sees each other. We talk about work but try not to talk about work too much. You know, and it's really that's an opportunity where everybody's out so you get a chance to see everybody that you don't get to see throughout, you know the year because they might not work on your project, or they might be you know, what we call TDY temporary duty you're traveling somewhere else for extended periods of time, you might not get to see them until that time of year.

01:42

[Break to fix mic chord and to allow Ben to clean a runny nose.]

BlaggBen5

Video 5

Sun, 4/17 3:45PM • 17:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

work, Shipyard, friends, retire, position, helped, generations, ship, paperwork, mentalities, adult, long, cookout, landscaping, years, kids, money, barbecue pit, person, enjoy

Interviewer 00:00

So last on the holiday party thing. I know you mentioned so back in the day, it was kind of split up by groups. Now you guys kind of congregate together. But what are some of the things you do. Is it just eating and then eating and drinking? Are there games?

00:14

So it varies year to year. It definitely can be weather dependent. For the most part, it's just a lot of drinking and socializing. And, you know, going to the different bars downtown for the most part and just bounce around just seeing friends and, and talking. Now there have been years where the different projects if the weather is nice, and it's warm enough, they will sometimes set up like Christmas day like cookouts and things like that, where they'll actually take, you know, invite everybody from their project or if you've worked on their project, and by project I mean a ship that's there. And they would basically, the management would sponsor a cookout. So they would go over to the Scott center, they would set up a big barbecue pit or something like that. And you know, they would just have food for everybody that came. And then we would play just, you know, softball games. I think this past year, I don't know if it actually happened or not. But they were supposed to have a little kickball tournament out there this year? I don't know. I don't remember if that happened or not. I don't think that it I think something happened with the weather wasn't quite what they wanted. But but for the most part, it's just a lot of socializing and, and beer. Just being honest.

Interviewer 01:34

Okay, so what has kept you at the Shipyard this long?

01:39

Money. To be honest. Money has kept me in the Shipyard for as long as I have, you know. I've been there 14 years, making just under \$40 an hour right now. And in August, I'll max out at my supervisor position at my pay grade, and I'll be making a little over \$41 an hour. And I get real overtime. So time and a half. And I work, you know, quite a bit of that as well. 50 - 60 Hour Work Week is normal for me. So the money has really been like my mainstay. I never thought I would make this kind of money. And when you look on the outside with my background, and nondestructive testing, I could get a job making this kind of money somewhere else but I would have to move a long way away. It's, it's tough to find somewhere around here that make the kind of money that we make at the Shipyard. And, really, I enjoy what I do, as well. The non-destructive testing aspect, and then just my unique position that I'm in, I'm not assigned to one project. I do the stuff over at the base, and you know, all the all the bases around here that you know, that accept naval ships and things like that. And also work on any given ship that's in the Shipyard. I'm not held to you know, just working on one ship and one group with one group of people. I work with everybody, which is unique. Not everybody gets to do that.

Interviewer 03:04

So you answered my next question, I was kind of what was your favorite thing about working there. So it seems like you'd like the flexibility?

03:10

Yes, I like I like to the not having the monotonous aspect of the working on the same ship with the same people looking at the same things every day. But at the same time, when I was an inspector, I enjoyed working on the ships, even if I was assigned to the same boat. As management, I'm not in all these different spaces everybody else is going to, but as an inspector, I enjoyed, you know, going to different parts of the boat, learning about the ship and everything like that, as I'm performing my inspections, you know. While I'm performing my inspections, I can ask them questions about other systems on the ship and things like that and what they're for. For me it kind of goes hand in hand with before I work there when I did landscaping, landscaping is you're somewhere different all the time. It wasn't cutting grass. We're actually doing landscapes on somebody's house. So you didn't go back to that same house every day. You go there for a couple of days, and the work is done. Now you're on to a different house in a completely different area. So not having the monotony of seeing the same thing, sitting in the same area and talking to the same people every day is like another one of my things. I don't, like the corporate life and things where I couldn't make the money that I'm making now but I'd be working with the same people at the same desk and doing the same thing every day that it's not anything that really, you know, hits my appetite very well. I like to be out and about and doing things and we'll have some flexibility.

Interviewer 04:35

So, I mean, like what else does it mean or, I guess, what other impact did you working in the Shipyard kind of have over your life? Like it seems like you really enjoy it, you're making the money you want, you know what is it allowing you to do as an adult you have this cool career?

04:51

Yeah, so so as an adult, and in general, you know, I never really felt like I was an adult just in the outside world. You know, I was an adult, you know, by the term adult 18 or older, but I didn't feel like one. You know, I still felt like I was this young kid who was just doing things and didn't really have any perspective on where I was going and what I wanted to do. So going in there just, you know, helped me get a line, and it got me kept me from getting in trouble. You know, I always, you know, I'm born and raised in Portsmouth and Portsmouth is what Portsmouth is, if you're from Portsmouth, you know what that means. And, you know, I had to, that helped me be able to have something steady, constant. The money was good, where I didn't have to, you know, do anything else, like, I could concentrate on my work and, you know, really establish a new group of friends and everything like that, and reconnect with old friends that I hadn't seen in forever. So that's it was really just helped me bring me back to center and, you know, helped me become a mature adult and not just a 25 year-old kid is I would say.

Interviewer 06:09

So how long do you plan to stay at the Shipyard? What do you are you already thinking about what you're gonna do after you retire?

06:15

I'm thinking about retiring as soon as I can. My parents took the early out option. They got to be able to get out at 55, whereas my group, the earliest we can retire is 57 for age, and so I plan on leaving as soon as I can. So, like, I haven't really thought about what I want to do, when I retire, I kinda want to do my parents do. I just want to get out and and be able to, you know, get out early enough where I can still enjoy life, you know. I have a lot of companions and people that have worked there that waited too late to retire, retired and pass away within a year. Didn't get to chance to enjoy it, or even know what life was like without working or without, you know, getting out of work and going to the hospital kind of thing. So seeing both sides of the spectrum, the early out option is definitely where I want to go as long as my money is right. You know, the Shipyard helps us with the great, you know a TSP for retirement. I've got a good amount of money net already. And then you know, I'm only halfway there.

Interviewer 07:15

What's a TSP?

07:17

It's a Thrift Savings Plan. So you set a certain amount of your your pay, and it only comes out of your regular time, not overtime, and you pay that you pay a percentage in so I'm paying 10% out of my check into that account. And it basically takes my money and it manipulate your money into the different funds that are created within there which basically fluctuates with the stock market. So as long as the stock market stays good, everything is good. If there's a bad year, you have a bad year, you know, unless you were ahead of the curve, and you move allocated your funds to different areas. But the Shipyard also matches you up to 5% on that, too. So as long as you're putting in 5%, they'll put in 5%. Anything above that, you know, you're doing that on your own. But 10% is a number that I've been doing as long as I've been able to, because that's that's the number to get your your retirement figures up into the seven figures where you can actually be able to afford to retire early and still be able to get some interest off of it.

Interviewer 08:21

So So are you looking at just travel after you retire, or is it landscaping again, or?

08:28

Well, we'll have to see when that time gets here, I don't have kids yet. Um, unfortunately, my wife can't have kids either. So we'll we'll just have to see, you know, where life takes us at that point. You know, we're for able to adopt, we get a young child, you know, that's fine. If we don't end up doing that, that's found me too. I've put it all out there for my wife, you know, whatever you want to do, if the child is really the thing that you want to do that, you know, we can try to adopt and do that. I said, but we can also, I don't have to stay in my current position, I'm almost maxed out where I'm at. And there's not really anywhere to go above me because everybody above me is, you know, my age or maybe within five years of my age. So they're not going anywhere for the next, you know, 5-10 years, so I'm stuck. So I'm looking at opportunities from where I'm at. I actually qualify for a lot of other positions outside of the Shipyard, still working within the government, but outside of the Shipyard, but I can go. I have a good friend of mine who just transferred to Japan. He's he transferred out there. He's working there for three years. You know, I got another friend who just went to Naples, Italy. He's working there for three years. Both of them plan on taking extensions, if they're offered. You can do those for up to nine years, as long as that position is still available, and they want you to still be there. Bahrain as an option. I'm not too keen on their culture there but that that is an option. And I've got another friend it's in Rota, Spain. He's been working there for two years. I think he's doing three years and then he's coming back. So, I don't know. I mean, I got a wide open, you know, world in front of me right now. And I'm getting to the finish line of what I wanted to accomplish as a supervisor. If I wasn't able to move up into the next levels of my management, then I wanted to max out where I'm at. So that way, when I take the next leap

into the beyond whatever I decide to try to go into, I want to make sure I can still maximize, you know, the amount of money that I make on that. So

Interviewer 10:32

sounds like that, like you got a lot of options. Okay, so what are your hopes and dreams for the future of the Shipyard?

10:41

My hopes and dreams for the future of the Shipyard are, hopefully, they become more realistic in the way that they approach situations when it's not, when something happens, and it's not what they expected. There's a lot of, they they try to engineer out the issues as opposed to trying to, to understand it, and get people able to perform the work. They try to come up with extra safety precautions, you know, if you're working outdoors. I'm used to the old way of doing things where we went, and we did a job, we got the job done. And now the Shipyard is built up to this point where there's so much paperwork involved, like if there's any issue whatsoever, it completely shuts down the work that you're working on. You know, there's it's turned into a lot of red tape. And a lot of paperwork, that's, in my opinion, not really necessary. Granted, we need to understand we need to understand what happened so we don't make that same mistake again. But those same mistakes, keep happening. And irregardless of the paperwork and red tape that they put in place, I just want to see them grow from that. And there's a lot of it comes with the mentality, like I talked about, it's like a big high school. So it ways to move up in the Yard, there's a lot of clicks, I guess, is the best way to put it. And if you have to be friends with with the person at the next level in order to get a lot of these upper positions, you know, and if you're not willing to be on that person's friends list and everything like that, and do what they do as well, then, you know, a kind of stops a lot of people that should, I'm not just talking about myself, but other people that have great mentalities and great ideas and things like that, it stops a lot of people from being able to move up in there. And that's, that's something that I think that a Shipyard really needs to work on as a whole. But in the future, I think that they'll that it'll start to come to light, there's new generations coming in and new mentalities coming in all the time. And I came in in a generation where you held your tongue and you know, you did your job and hope that your work showed for itself, and these new generations coming in, and it's crazy. I call them kids. They're not kids. They're grown adults. But they they're way more vocal than, than we were coming up. You kind of just took it and went with it. But these guys, you know, they stand up for so I see there's a, probably in the next 10 to 15 years, there's gonna be some changes in that. And then the technology aspect. At the Shipyard I really hope they start investing in in the real New Age technology, because there's so much out there and we're 10 to 15 years behind, at least on technology are across the board. And I really hope to see us grow and invest in ourselves, not invest in you know, outside entities that come in and do the work for us. You know, I want I want to see them invest in the blue collar person, the one on the deck plate, doing the work, not the person who's writing paperwork so much.

Interviewer 13:59

I like that. I definitely agree with the future generation being more vocal. Course, I see that, yeah, teaching high school and having to adjust my approach because when we were in high school you did what the teacher said, you know, but I think I listened to their feelings and their thoughts a lot more. And I like that they can verbalize that. Yeah, definitely something that I'm trying to teach my kids now.

14:24

Yeah, we didn't we were we didn't get, when I was younger. It was like you didn't vocalize your opinion. If you did vocalize your opinion, and you are the problem person. And now it's like you're expected to vocalize your opinion. And it's tough for some, some other generations even before me to like really understand it. I still have trouble with it. I don't have kids so I don't have to see it as much but, you know, I can be in around high school kids every now and then and going to my friend's events with their kids and stuff like that. I do get to see that quite a bit.

Interviewer 14:56

I kind of just tell them that as long as they do it respectfully because of the fact that we couldn't, like there were times when we did want to speak up but, you know, it would have been looked at as talking back. So there's a certain way to do it because I wish I would have been more vocal but, you hit it right on the nail, and I do agree, hopefully, you know, well you're included, just millennials peers and I think as Gen Z after us, you know, I think things will improve as we speak out about it. So I like that sound bite and it will definitely be in the video. The next question is what is some advice for people interested in working at the Shipyard?

15:29

People that are interested in working in the Shipyard? Apply. Apply when the Apprenticeship comes out. Go to the the events, the job events. If you have any, any track, any trade, any background whatsoever in any trade doesn't matter. You don't have to have any background at all. At the same time, just apply. The worst that they could say is no. The best thing could happen is you get accepted and you end up, you know, loving what you do, loving the people you work with, and everything like that. And just because you don't get accepted one year, you need to understand, you know, there's 1500 - 2000 people, maybe not as many now as there was back when I came through, back when I came through, there was 3 - 4000 people applying. And they only took 150, you know. So that it's it's not like it's better odds than hitting the lottery. But you know, it's still not, there's not very many people, you know, it's a 10% 10 to 20% of the people that might get selected maybe. So don't get disheartened just because you didn't make it one year you weren't selected. Apply the next time. Go to the job events. Don't think that you have to go to college to come in here because we hire people straight out of high

school, you know, and build them into the people that we want them to be. So you don't have to have a background - can't have a criminal background - but you don't have to have a background in what you're doing to come into the yard and really build on yourself.

Interviewer 17:00

And these are our last two questions. Just overall, how do you think Portsmouth has evolved over the years?

17:10

Poor Portsmouth.

BlaggBen6

Video 6

Sun, 4/17 3:46PM • 13:45

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

portsmouth, shipyard, City, waterfront, invest, hear, built, park, working, land, dad, finally, emails, mom, blegh, area, kid, mayor, manager, class

00:00

Portsmouth has been trying for a long time to move up. I think one of the best things that that happened to Portsmouth was Mayor Holly finally got, didn't get reelected. Nothing against Mayor Holly, but, you know, he was our mayor for a long time, and nobody, you know, would go against him. And if they did, they didn't make it. He's out. And you know, it's been a cycle of Mayors. You know, but we've always, it's tough for Portsmouth because the state owns one of the ports, the federal government owns Norfolk Naval Shipyard, and everything else around it pretty much except for the neighborhood's obviously. So that's not taxable land, they don't get taxes from that part. And it's a huge chunk, chunk of area. Luckily, the, the new ports that they built over there, off of 164, I forgot what the name of those are, but those ports, they didn't sell to the state. So that was awesome. Because the state was trying to buy him out, like real quick, because as soon as they saw what they were, what the potential was, for that land, the state tried to buy them out and that would've become more non-taxable land for the City of Portsmouth. We got the Coast Guard base, not taxable. You know, all this stuff is added up into, we get cut out of a lot of the stuff that's going on. The surrounding cities, you know, all get a cut from the tolls and everything like that for the tunnels but not Portsmouth. We don't get

anything from that, you know. And all that stuff was happening back when we had another mayor at the time, you know, that deal, all those deals were made back then. There was some sort of a cut, back deal door, maybe, I don't know. But we've we've tried really hard to try to move, up build up our our waterfront and everything like that. That's why taxes are as high as they are in our City, because they're trying to make up for lost ground with the other other places. And they're not investing as much. And the state I don't feel like is investing as much as they should into this area as well. They're more the touristy areas, the Virginia Beach waterfront and the Chesapeake waterfront and Hampton, you know, with the bay, you know, but we kind of get left out. Hopefully, you know, bringing the casino in there can be looked at both ways, but it is a chance to bring in some really good income for the City itself, as well as bringing people here to see this City that they might not have seen otherwise. Hopefully, that you know, they keep that as a positive thing and it doesn't turn in anything other than that. Building bit the waterfront back up. When they first built the Ntelos Pavillion, I don't know what it's called now. Used to be the Ntelos Pavillion. When that got built, when it first came in, and they pushed the City pushed, and they actually brought in like big name shows, and things like that. And then all that kind of slowly went away because they built this nice thing, but the City didn't invest in anything else around it. So it's like you just had this this shiny little thing with mud everywhere else, it's like. they it was a struggle to get investors to come in, I think but they but the City has been building on it, you know. The schools. They started investing in the schools. I was glad to see, you know, like Wilson or Manor High School. They invested, well, it wasn't them, it was private investment to get their sports facilities, you know, back up into a good spot where when I played sports there, you didn't want to fall on the ground because there were rocks and gravel in the ground. You know, they finally came out, leveled the fields and actually made a real sportsplex area. The Waterfront being built back up finally, you know, they made that look nice. Getting some more residential areas down here, not just the historic district, but actually putting in apartments and townhomes. Like that's the stuff that cities do to bring people in to bring in revenue. And I'm just glad to see. It's taken a long time for them to do it. But I'm glad to see that you know, the, the City's starting to try to finally invest in downtown. Historic Portsmouth, downtown Portsmouth, is is the attraction for Portsmouth. It's not West Haven. It's not you know, Cavalier manner, that's not the attraction. This is right, right down the street here from this school. And it's good to see, you know, they're finally starting to invest in it. They could do a quite a bit more, but I understand, you know, what money is what money is here. But I would love to see this, you know, see some more investment in our in our historic district because that is our main draw to this area.

Interviewer 04:20

You answered both questions I had, because it was more of like, what did you see in the future for Portsmouth and you kind of touched on it? Now earlier? I'm not sure if we asked but what neighborhood I guess do you live in now or since you've been working in the Shipyard if you're in Portsmouth and

04:35

So now now I live in West Haven. S you know, seven minute five to seven minute drive to work. So it's nice being close to work. It's a gift and a curse because they also know that I'm close by so that when something happens and I'm a manager, you know, they can call me and I can be there quickly and not like some of the other guys. But to me it's been great. I know. One thing people don't think about and I really didn't notice it until I start working to Shipyard is that you can actually hear colors at eight o'clock in the morning and at sunset. You know, I can hear them playing the national anthem and stuff like that from my house every morning if I want to, if I go out at that time. I never really thought about that as a kid, you know, I've never really paid attention to. It might have happened and it might have been able to hear it then because, um, you know, half a mile from my childhood home. So if I'm hearing it at my house, I gotta be able to hear it at my parents house too. So it's, it's cool. I like living where where I'm at.

Interviewer 05:31

You think you'll stay there?

05:35

Probably, unless my wife, you know, finally yanks me out of Portsmouth. That's a possibility. She wants a little more space and some animals and things like that. So we'll, we'll see what the future holds on that too. Exactly. For the most part.

Interviewer 05:52

Gary was there anything else?

No.

Okay, thank you.

05:56

So I did want to say there was one other one other event when I was a kid, so that I know this isn't in structure. But so there was an event at Portsmouth City Park when I was a kid. They had like a children's day or something like that out there. So there was one year we buried a time capsule. I was there for that. And it's still there. I actually went and looked at it the other day with my wife. And I think it gets uncovered and 2035 I think is when we're supposed to undo it. I think we buried it in '95 and it comes up in 2035. So here in about 13 years that's going to be coming up on the ground. So I'm very curious what we put in there back then. Because that was the school's all the different Portsmouth public schools got together and got to add something to it. So I'm looking forward to that. But the Children's Day, the family day

thing that they did at Portsmouth City Park, and they built the Pokey Smokey and everything that was kind of fresh at that point in time. I don't know if it even runs anymore. The little train at Portsmouth City park. Um,

Interviewer 06:56

It does. Did you know, they just renovated the Park. They have this really cool ... I was there that day when they unveiled it.

07:05

We take the dogs over there and everything. Okay, so it is back up and running again. Okay, so yeah, so, I mean, we always had fun playing over there. And I played golf over there when I was a kid too at the golf course. But the Children's Day event that they did there, I'm not every year, I don't think but I know that there was one year particular. I was probably about 10 or 11 years old was probably 95-96, maybe 94, but either way, there was actual military helicopter that flew in. One of the passengers style ones not one has guns and stuff, but it looks like guns. I didn't know that until now. But we actually got to go on that and see that and then it actually landed while we were all there. And it took off at the end of it while we were all there. But there was that was just like a really cool thing. Like a military helicopter coming in landing right there in Portsmouth City Park. Right next to where the fishing pier is now. That's where it landed. And, you know, we got to get on and tour that and then they had-- it was almost like a like elementary school field day. They had all these different little competitions. You know, you you earn tickets by doing so well and things like that. That was really cool. And then I don't know if they still do it or not but they also used to have the jet boat races right there into the opening of the Elizabeth River right there. I don't know if that still happens or not. But there used to be the small jet boats, the real the super fast ones that literally fly 60 70 80 miles an hour. I don't know how fast they go. But just barely skim across the water. You could hear them at my house at my, my childhood home in Park Manor. And we would hear that, and it was like, Hey, we got to go to the park. So we would all hop on our bicycles. And we would you know, we would ride out to the park and go watch the jet boats race around and everything like that. And that was a really, really cool thing to see. I don't think they do that anymore around here. But

Interviewer 09:01

Was there anything else you want to share?

09:02

Nope, those were the things I wanted to add. That I thought about.

Interviewer 09:07

And you might have answered this, just, since we're interviewing the whole family. Did your mom or dad like inspired you at all? What was their first what is the first thing that they said to you when you did decide you wanted to work at the Shipyard? Because originally you didn't. So like what did they say? Like? It's about time or?

09:25

So when I first got there, it wasn't it's about time there's more like, so are you ready for this? You know, ready to see what this is really about and everything like that. And my response was still no, not really, but I mean, here I am doing what you wanted me to do. But then after about you know the first six to eight months to a year of being in there, they were like so. So now how do you like it? I was like it's actually kind of cool. Never thought that I get to do everything that I was doing. You know getting to travel and things like that. In my second year of working there, I was already starting to travel by myself to other places and go work with other people I'd never met before, which was completely crazy to me at that time, you know. I'd never traveled unless I was with my parents or with, you know, some college friends or something like that. So it was yeah, it was more of a how you like me now, kind of thing is, is how it was. But the first day and everything like that it was, you know, I still reserved judgment.

Interviewer 10:30

And what was that like working with them? Did you ever get to have lunch with them? Did your mom bring you something or embarrass you?

10:40

Oh, no. So my parents were there long enough where and they were in positions where a lot of people knew who they were. And, and I had already met a lot of their friends through outside functions and their friendships in the shipyard. So my mom, which she probably had talked about her stuff, but she was basically she managed all the servers in the Shipyard, which she probably I talked about. Well, she had to send out Shipyard wide emails when the servers and things were up and down and things like that. So I'd be walking through the office and you know, it's the fellas, but there's "Hey man, your mom, email me again". It's like so "Alright, guys, calm down". And so yeah, my so I got a lot of heckling from, you know, my mom sending out emails and stuff. And you know, people just that one and then also "Can you tell your mom to stop emailing me like filling my mailbox up, like what the heck", you know. And then my dad, he was in a training department. So he, he taught a specific class that was very difficult. But he presented it in a way where as long as you paid attention, he taught you how to do it and then he practically taught you how to do it. Like you learn it in the book first and then he actually shows you how you're doing this and everything like that, but it's not so much hands on, but just like, you read it first and then you visually get to see how it actually happens. And now it puts A and B together so they're not two separate things, they flow. And he was it was a tough

class. And he was a tough teacher, and you passed or you failed. There was no, you know, you sink or swim in his class. And he didn't give favors or anything like that. And I you know, kind of I was very busy on the waterfront. And I was working on all different shifts all the time and they see my my name and my hard hat and like "Blagg, your dad Richard?". They're like, Yeah, I was like, so what's up and they were like, "Can you please tell him to take it easy on me when I'm like, we're getting ready to test next week, man, and like, your dad is just tough man. Like, I can't figure him out". I was like, "Nah, man, I didn't get no breaks growing up, you think you're gonna get a break? Now he doesn't even know you. And I'm his kid. Like, no, that's not going to happen." So that was that was kind of a fun thing for me when I came into the Shipyard too, was the fact that there were people that knew me, but didn't know me, because they had heard about me through my parents, you know, because, you know, they both worked there and started on the waterfront, and then worked our way up into positions where they were managers, but they were also heavily involved in all these different groups. And that's kind of where, where I'm at now. You know, I'm a manager, you know, I'm not at the level that they ended up being but I'm still working my way there. And but I know so many people and so many people know who I am inside of that Shipyard like, you say my name inside of there and odd odds are at least 50 - 60% of people you would talk to have probably heard of me or seen me in passing and stuff like that. Like it's just it's crazy. Really.

Interviewer 13:43

Thank you