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Jack Arnold

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
David Washburn
in 2003

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00:14:50

Tension between Merchant Marines and enlisted men, services and access were often denied to Merchant Marines. -- Stories of how Merchant Marines were received in foreign and American cities. -- Familiarity with Richmond. Visited with his brother, stayed with his father for a few days. -- Description of father’s employment in defense industry, work first in Alaska shipyard, later came to Richmond. -- Met wife in neighboring war housing project. -- Settling down in Richmond, lived in war housing on Cutting, later bought a home on 50th Street. -- Story of neighbors, the Miyamotos—Japanese family that was interned during the war, did not discuss the topic with them. -- Stopped serving with Merchant Marines in June 1945, description of crew. -- Stayed in Richmond a few weeks between jobs/trips with the Merchant Marines. Found work at local National Maritime Union hiring hall, describes hiring practices.

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Description of Liberty ships on which he served. -- Worked as a bartender in Richmond, employment after leaving Merchant Marine. -- Description of Silver Dollar Bar, clientele worked at shipyards and other local industries.

00:45:30

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[Audio File 2]

00:00:45

Bartending when the shipyards closed. -- Lost job at El Cerrito bar when service men replaced him, found work at the Townhouse, a bar on Tenth Street in Richmond. -- Returned to wife’s hometown in Colorado, opened a bar. -- Description of the Townhouse bar, clientele—doctors, lawyers, shipyard workers. -- Segregated clientele—blacks were not received well in the bar, by staff. -- Familiarity with Mexican community. -- Memories of the Townhouse and Tenth Street area.

00:14:15

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[Interview #2: February, 23, 2003]

[Audio File 3]

00:03:00

Recaps story of how he settled in Richmond. -- Memories of the shipyard workers who came into his bar, some came in with suits and hard hats on, noticed southern accent. -- Meeting people from Iowa in Richmond. -- Colorado Club, small gathering of migrants from Colorado. -- Locals’ sentiment about change in Richmond.

00:14:20

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00:30:15

Segregation in Richmond’s various neighborhoods. -- Communist organization met across the street from Arnold home, he assisted in tracking who came and went, help in the investigation of the organization. Various anti-Communist sentiments.

00:41:00

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[Audio File 4]

00:01:30

Music in bars: jukeox vs. live band, popular music of the era. -- Dating behavior seen in bars. -- Country music scene in Richmond during the war, post-war, swing music.

00:18:45

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Interview with Jack Arnold

Interviewed by: David Washburn

Transcriber: Diana Limbach and Sam Schramski

[Interview #1: February 1, 2003]

[Begin Audio File Arnold.t01]

01-00:00:27

Washburn:

My name's David Washburn and I'm interviewing Jack Arnold here in El Cerrito. Jack, I don't want to talk too much about growing up in Iowa because we'd be here all day probably. But just briefly, when and where were you born?

01-00:00:50

Arnold:

I was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa. It's across the Missouri River from Omaha. That's where my dad worked for the newspaper. {The non pro.} And worked in lumberyards. His dad had five lumberyards one time. Very successful. Until the crash come and took everything. 1929, 28 or 9. So then we moved to a little farm out of Vail, where my mother was from. She inherited 80 to 100 acres, something like that, of land. So that didn't work for my dad because he wasn't a farmer in the first place. [laughs]

01-00:01:45

So then we moved to Van Meter and he bought a store. So he and I went to Van Meter, and they stayed on the farm until they sold that, my mother and the rest of the family. So I was the delivery boy. Had a little wagon and delivered groceries. [laughs] Maybe made 10 cents, 20 cents. And then I had a paper route when I was a kid. The train never stopped, it goes through town 80 miles an hour. And throw it off, and pick up the mail on an arm. So here I am in the wintertime, freezing to death, trying to find the snow in a snow bank. [laughs]

01-00:02:23

Washburn:

Trying to find the mail in a snow bank.

01-00:01:51

Arnold:

Yes, but I got the paper route. That was the Des Moines Register Tribune.

01-00:02:36

Washburn:

So where were you raised?

01-00:02:40

Arnold:

Van Meter.

01-00:02:41

Washburn:

In Van Meter, Iowa.

01-00:02:42

Arnold:

The best three things I used to say come from there was Bob Feller, Jack Arnold, and the road going west. [laughs] Bob Feller was quite a pitcher. He's in the Hall of Fame, he played for Cleveland. So I caught him for four years, I was a high school catcher when he left. In a gym. And I couldn't get no fast balls from him in a gym because I couldn't see it.

01-00:03:03

Washburn:

So I want to ask you about what Iowa was like right before World War II. What did most people do right prior to the war, in 1940, 1941, for work?

01-00:03:38

Arnold:

It was a farming area. Everybody had farms. We were eighteen miles from Des Moines, a few people worked there. And we had the grocery store. And we had a nice school; it was a unified school, first grade to twelfth grade. Nice gym, always had a good basketball, good baseball team. Des Moines had five high schools, and we beat them all. [laughs]

01-00:04:15

Washburn:

So where did most residents work?

01-00:04:21

Arnold:

Around farms--it wasn't a big town. Three hundred-fifty people. Van Meter was. I guess quite a few worked at the Ford Plant in Des Moines. Big plant there. I think most people worked there. And a telephone company. I can't say what though. I remember two guys that worked on the roads. They made pretty good money I guess. [laughs] But it was a poor little town. Outside toilets. [laughs] When I had to come back, everything was modern then. I didn't go back there to live, but I come through there, in '43.

01-00:05:05

Washburn:

So prior to the war, most people didn't have the modern homes that they did later on?

01-00:05:16

Arnold:

Yes, now it's beautiful back there. You can buy homes like this not too far out of town. And no deer then, when I was there, but now a lot of deer, pheasants.

01-00:05:29

Washburn:

Right before the war, how old were you in 1940? When did you graduate high school?

01-00:05:44

Arnold:

I never did. I left when I was a senior. But I got my diploma. After fifty years, they gave me my diploma. I left in November of '42, and went to Sheep's Head Bay, Long

Island, for training. And then I got sunk on a tanker in '43, and come back here out of the West Coast. I said no more tankers—

01-00:06:15

Washburn:

So you were still in high school when the war broke out?

01-00:06:21

Arnold:

Yes.

01-00:06:22

Washburn:

What were your ambitions, what did you want to do, right before the war broke out, before we knew we were going to go to war?

01-00:06:32

Arnold:

I had a scholarship for Drake University. I'd have wound up going there and being a coach, math teacher, and manual arts teacher, probably, like three or four other guys did. Athletes. And that's probably what I'd have been. I'm glad I didn't. But they were all successful, I guess. I met them all at the fiftieth anniversary. They gave me my diploma. The superintendent of schools said, "Jack, don't you worry. You'll get a diploma." The war was going on then.

01-00:07:10

Washburn:

So how did you make the decision to enter the Merchant Marines?

01-00:07:18

Arnold:

Come out in the paper, "Join the Merchant Marines! See the world! Lots of money!" So this guy's going to get drafted in the army, he says, "Jack, let's join this thing." So I says, fine. I'm going to make some money, you know? [laughs] See the world. So we went together, and we met people from different towns, in Des Moines. I had to get my records, my name registered. So my Dad took me to Des Moines. I had no name. Baby Arnold. I could have named myself for fifty cents anything I wanted. But I kept the Jack Kenneth. [laughs] For my birth certificate, that's what it was. So from there we went to Sheep's Head Bay. Pulled into Grand Central Station, come out onto the sidewalk, and you could tell that we were from the hicks from the country, looking up at the Empire State Building, and all those big tall buildings. I started sailing, from there. Actually, I started sailing from New Jersey.

01-00:08:39

Washburn:

So you found out about the Merchant Marines in the newspaper?

01-00:08:43

Arnold:

Yes

01-00:08:44

Washburn:

So what was your motivation for going into the Merchant Marines, rather than some other service?

01-00:08:56

Arnold:

Well, good money! It's dangerous. I didn't care about the danger, because I take care of myself pretty good. But I did get off of three ships. This old sailor from Boston, he said, "This is going to [Mer Mance]. The one ship out of ten will make it to [Mer Mance]." Thank god, he had me under his wing. We didn't get on any of those ships.

01-00:09:24

Washburn:

For someone who doesn't know much about the Merchant Marines, can you describe what they did?

01-00:09:32

Arnold:

We hauled oil, in tankers, plane fuel. And merchant ships, cargo, all kinds of cargo. The ship I went down on was an oil tanker in the Caribbean.

01-00:09:54

Washburn:

The Merchant Marines were not part of the service at that time, correct?

01-00:10:05

Arnold:

That's right, at that time. We belonged to the Commerce Department. And the shipping company, the federal government paid us the same amount. The salary wasn't that big, but it was pretty good. And we got torpedoed, we got 500 dollars for that. Sunk. If you got bombed, you got another 500. Close by, in the danger zone. We got chased from this other trip. We left Curaçao in Aruba and in the keys of Florida there's a PBY plane goes over and it says, "Get the hell out of here. There's thirteen wolf pack down there." Thirteen subs. So they chased us to [Ocorso], which is Cologne, Panama. We beat them there.

01-00:11:07

Washburn:

When and how did you learn that serving in the Merchant Marines was dangerous?

01-00:11:17

Arnold:

Well, it was in the paper. I knew it was dangerous. Because the Atlantic was full of subs. And finally, we put in the degaussing system on the ships, so the polar parts of the ships wouldn't suck the torpedoes in. So the degaussing system knocked that off, so they had to come straight at you to hit you. Otherwise they'd go around like this and hit, and

the magnet would pull it in. But as soon as I started sailing I knew it was dangerous. But the money was good too. And I sailed for Esso Standard New Jersey, at that time.

01-00:12:09

Washburn:

You sailed out of what?

01-00:12:10

Arnold:

Esso, Standard New Jersey. We booked in Hoboken that's where we pulled in. New Jersey. The Statue of Liberty is right there. We were right by it.

01-00:12:24

Washburn:

Right on the other side of the harbor.

01-00:12:25

Arnold:

Yes.

01-00:12:27

Washburn:

Or in the middle of the harbor, it is.

01-00:12:31

What did you do with the money that you were paid? And what did the other Merchant Marines you served with do with the money they were paid?

01-00:12:44

Arnold:

Spent it. Most of—[laughs] I learned my lesson from some old wiper on the ship. Angel Gang. Tears coming out of his eyes paying everybody off in poker money at the end of his trip. I says, that'll teach me not to play poker. Gamble on the ship. And I helped my folks. I sent them money.

01-00:13:06

Washburn:

You sent them home money? Why did you send them home money?

01-00:13:17

Arnold:

Well, we lost the store and my dad fed everybody in town in the Depression. Everybody was on the books, even Bob Feller's folks were on the books. He never did pay it back, and he was making big money. Eighty-some thousand, at that time, was a lot of money. I think he made eighty-seven thousand. But we took care of it, going out of business. So my two brothers joined the Coast Guard, in '39 I think it was. Before the war. So my dad, he was a pretty good carpenter, he went to Dutch Harbor and built. Oh, I guess it was like they had in Richmond, war housing, up in Dutch Harbor in Alaska. So he worked up there until he comes to Richmond, and worked as a glazier on a ship. Shipyards. And I met my wife—.

01-00:14:24

Washburn:

How much would you send them home of your pay?

01-00:14:30

Arnold:

Oh, couple hundred dollars a month. In fact I put down a payment on their house, when they had it.

01-00:14:46

Washburn:

A lot of other people in the service couldn't do that because they weren't making the same money. Did you feel fortunate to be serving for the Merchant Marines?

01-00:14:56

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes. They finally put armed guard on them. Navy guys. We took care of them. We go on shore; we always buy them booze, something to eat. It was our extra money.

01-00:15:11

Washburn:

Well, explain that. Why did they do that and how did that work?

01-00:15:17

Arnold:

Well, they gave us hell for making so much money. And here they're riding with us, and supposed to protect us. They had about ten guys running the guns. Five each on the back, and three each on the front, he bow. 20 millimeter cages. I guess it was a little envious of us, making the kind of money we each made.

01-00:15:44

Washburn:

So what would you do when you had shore leave?

01-00:15:49

Arnold:

Find a bar. [laughs] Some places they wouldn't let us in, because we was Merchant Marines. We weren't servicemen. In fact, I hate the Red Cross. When we got sunk, they wouldn't help us out. We were civilians. So the Salvation Army helped us out. It was toothpaste, toothbrushes, some clothes until we got back to New York. The USO, they wouldn't let us in. Truman just about had it. They pigeonholed the thing—

01-00:16:26

Washburn:

Just about had what?

01-00:16:29

Arnold:

Had us servicemen. And Roosevelt had it. They pigeonholed when he died, and it was forgotten until it was, I think it was '78 or '87 when we become servicemen. They turned it over to the Coast Guard.

01-00:16:46

Washburn:

I was going to ask you that question. How were you received when you went overseas?

01-00:16:57

Arnold:

Very good. Very good. There was no servicemen there, usually. On the way someplace, over or back. Honolulu, we stopped there. That's where I beat Bobo Wilson. Knocked him out two rounds. [laughs] I didn't know him, he didn't know me. But I got acquainted with him later when he became the champion in the world. Middle weight champion.

01-00:17:27

Washburn:

So you boxed someone— What branch of the military was he in?

01-00:17:37

Arnold:

Bobo? He was just a kid. He lived in Hawaii at the time. But he never was in the service.

01-00:17:43

Washburn:

Oh, so he wasn't a service—

01-00:17:45

Arnold:

But he was a fighter, at the time, I guess. He was probably sixteen, I was nineteen, I guess. [laughs] No competition, really, for me, but— he's [inaudible] and he was pretty nice—

01-00:18:03

Washburn:

What was his name again?

01-00:18:04

Arnold:

Bobo Olson.

01-00:18:09

Washburn:

Did you notice a difference in the way people received you as a merchant marine in different cities?

01-00:18:23

Arnold:

Yes. In Chicago, on the way back after I got sunk. Took the Grand Central to Chicago; we had to stay over five hours to catch the Rock Island to Des Moines. I had the uniform, looked like I was the chief or something in the [laughs] navy or something. There was merchant marine insignia though. And I went into this bar and all these WACs stood up and saluted me. Naturally, I felt bad. I felt ashamed of myself. And the

same thing in Des Moines. I fought for this guy, too, I can't remember his name. He was a promoter, and I fought a fight in Kansas City and I won. Can't think of his name. But it had a bar, beautiful bar, but it was against the law to even have a bar in Iowa at that time. But he was paying somebody off.

01-00:19:27

Washburn:

So you were saying that the WACs—The WACs were women—

01-00:19:30

Arnold:

Army. They were in Des Moines. They had three of the biggest hotels there, took them over. Then it was nothing but women. [laughs] And that was where they all stood up, too. And I didn't have a tie on. She says, "You're out of uniform, sir." I says, "What do you mean?" I say, "I'm a merchant marine. I can dress in shorts if I want to. [laughs] Woke her up. Thought she was going to get somebody [inaudible] higher than her. You can't do nothing to him, he's Merchant Marines. [laughs]

01-00:20:13

Washburn:

What did you know about Richmond before you moved here?

01-00:20:23

Arnold:

Nothing. I took a brand new ship out of here that was it. The Ring Lardner, a liberty ship. It was loaded with nothing but bombs and torpedoes. All ammo. From here to Brisbane, Australia. It took six weeks to get there. Brand new ship when we left, when we were there looked like a rust bucket when got there. Went eight knots wide open. Zigzag [inaudible]. But we stop in Hawaii first. That's where I met Bobo.

1-00:20:58

Washburn:

So you came to Richmond on another ship?

1-00:21:05

Arnold:

No. I come across by car. I bought a car, and my brother-in-law was a machinist, right out of Des Moines. Ames, Iowa. [inaudible] I don't know, they did something for the war there. Ammo or something. So he says, "I'll go with you." He was a journeyman machinist, and he's about 23 years old. So he went worked Standard Oil, and a journeyman there had to be 40 years old before he could become a journeyman. So he was the youngest machinist out there. So we bunked up where my dad who was out in some garage, somewhere on Ohio Street down in Richmond. So we bunked there, and of course I was only there two days and got a ship, the Ring Lardner. [laughs]

1-00:21:57

Washburn:

But you did know something about Richmond because your dad worked here.

1-00:22:03

Arnold:

Yes, he worked at the shipyards.

1-00:22:08

Washburn:

He was too old to go into the service.

1-00:22:11

Arnold:

My dad? Oh yes. Right now he'd be 115 if he'd kept living.

1-00:22:24

Washburn:

So tell me, how did your Dad go from Des Moines finally to Richmond? Can you follow his story a little bit?

1-00:22:35

Arnold:

Yes, he went to Dutch Harbor from there. From Van Meter. How he got there, I don't know. By plane, I guess. He went to Des Moine and joined— it wasn't service but— Carpenters or somebody had to go up there and build these things. So when he finished that, he come to Richmond cause it was shipyards. They were trying anybody that could walk. So he become a glazier, putting the ships together. Glass men, portholes and stuff.

1-00:23:08

Washburn:

What years were these?

1-00:23:10

Arnold:

'43. So '44, that's when I met my wife Irma. They lived in housing across from us upstairs. Her and her family, my folks, and me, and my younger sister. So, I know her three weeks, we get married. [laughs]

1-00:23:40

Washburn:

So before you came to Richmond, what did your father tell you about what it was like?

1-00:23:46

Arnold:

He didn't know. He had no idea what I was going through. Guess he wasn't at any part in the war. Except up there in Dutch Harbor.

1-00:23:57

Washburn:

Did he describe Richmond to you at all?

1-00:24:01

Arnold:

No. We finally found him. I guess I called my mother up. He was staying in this place in the garage. Everybody had their garage fixed up for bunks, for people to sleep in. So, we found him.

1-00:24:17

Washburn:

What were your impressions of Richmond, for those couple of days that you came in 1943?

1-00:24:28

Arnold:

Well, it was a big town. Way bigger than where I come from. And it was pretty nice. But then when I come back, I stayed with my folks at the war housing project. When I got married I brought a house around the corner on 50th Street. That's where my wife and I started out there. I got married in '44. Fifty-seven years ago. Fifty-eight years ago!

1-00:25:01

Washburn:

You married in '44?

1-00:25:03

Arnold:

Yes, '44.

1-00:25:05

Washburn:

When and where did you settle first?

1-00:25:11

Arnold:

After I got married, I bought this house. Right up the street around the corner, on 50th Street. Off of Cutting.

1-00:25:21

Washburn:

Could you describe what the house was like?

1-00:25:26

Arnold:

Yes. It was a brick house. White brick, two bedrooms. It wasn't a real big house, but— Two bedrooms—My daughter was born in '45. August 8th, she was born. So we lived there for a year, before she was born. I got a kick out of Frank Perelli, he was our milkman. And he was a friend of the Silver Dollar bunch up there. He would walk in, we wouldn't be home. There'd be butter, eggs, and milk, he'd just walk in the door and put them in the refrigerator! [laughs] You trusted people at that time.

1-00:26:11

Washburn:

Yes, so describe who else lived in that neighborhood?

1-00:26:14

Arnold:

Well up at the end of the street were the {Miamoto} family. They had a florist [shop]. I think it was '44, they let them out of the place they put them all, the Japanese people. Different places around the country. And the old man fellow, planted flowers for us. Very nice people. And I knew two of the sons, Tommy and Richie {Miamoto}, and the sister, Dolly they called her. They're still in business, somewhere out in Point Richmond somewhere. North Richmond—

1-00:27:03

Washburn:

Who else lived in that neighborhood?

1-00:27:04

Arnold:

I couldn't name anybody.

1-00:27:07

Washburn:

Were they all—

1-00:27:09

Arnold:

People from out of state, yes. My folks would know them, but I didn't know them. They made friends.

1-00:27:21

Washburn:

When you moved there, were the Japanese still in the internment camps?

1-00:27:27

Arnold:

In internment camps? I think they were, yes. Before we moved on, I think they let them out, in '44 or '45, something like that.

1-00:27:41

Washburn:

And did you ever talk with folks like Miamoto about his time?

1-00:27:46

Arnold:

No. Because they were ashamed that they'd even be there. They were as good as I was, as far as I was concerned. I thought it was bad too. They didn't do it with Italians, and Germans, they didn't put them in internment camps. They were our enemies, they were active. They weren't allies at that time.

1-00:28:21

Washburn:

When did you stop serving for the Merchant Marines?

1-00:28:29

Arnold:

June of '45.

1-00:28:31

Washburn:

So you came in and out of Richmond then?

1-00:28:38

Arnold:

Yes, well out of San Francisco was our port.

1-00:28:46

Washburn:

Describe that, I don't know, do you serve like a platoon, or a certain time? Could you describe what that was like, when you go off for a certain amount of time and come back?

1-00:29:02

Arnold:

Well, I think we had thirteen men on deck. The navy, they have two hundred-thirteen. And a pigeon crew, they had twelve or thirteen guys. And that was all we had on the ships. Of course, the captain, and the first mate, and the second mate, and the third mate.

1-00:29:26

Washburn:

So when you lived in Richmond, when and why would you go off and serve?

1-00:29:34

Arnold:

I'd stay a couple of weeks. Then I'd go to the union hall, get another ship. I belong to NMU, the National Maritime Union. And they had one other one, SUP, Saliors Union Pacific. But I already belonged to one out of New York, NMU. Joe Kearn was his name, was the head of it. So I still sail under NMU here, out of San Francisco.

1-00:30:06

Washburn:

So they would hire you. Describe it, I don't know how that process worked. How would it work?

1-00:30:17

Arnold:

Go to the union hall, and wait, you know. How many AB's they want, and this and that. Ordinary Z was the lowest, AB was next. And that was as high you go on deck, unless he was a boatswain, which I wound up, youngest boatswain sailing out of San Francisco. That was on a C-2 cargo ship. The Liberty had steam wenches, burnt coal to cook with.

Had a blunt bow, it pushed the water, didn't cut it, like the sea jobs did. That like a clipper bow, like that. A wedge would go like this.

1-00:31:16

Washburn:

Well what did the Merchant Marines think about the Liberty ships?

1-00:31:21

Arnold:

Well they got them there. They paid for them selves, one trip. They served a purpose for the United States. To get people over, supplies. I took a— that was a liberty ship too. Can't remember the name of it. We was in Enewetak, in the Marshall Islands. And we laid on the hook fifty-six days, waiting to go on to Saipan or Guam. Fifty-six days, we ran out of food. So we dropped the lifeboat, and we begging food from all the little ships around there. Must have been a thousand ships there on hook. Waiting for the Saipan or Guam invasion. We went to Guam.

1-00:32:12

Washburn:

Where were you guys stationed at that time?

1-00:32:13

Arnold:

Marshall Islands, Enewetak. I hit a nine iron across it. A golf ball.

1-00:32:22

Washburn:

So did you serve on liberty ships, during this time?

1-00:32:28

Arnold:

Yes. Not all of them. Did the C jobs, C-2 cargo. Golden Gate, was the name of that. Nice ship. And my last ship was an U.S. lines, was a C-1. I didn't make the trip on that, because I knocked the hell out of the third mate. [laughs] Irma was still pregnant with our first child, Jackie. I come late, that was most of them. So he's up there giving my guys hell for doing something, he didn't know what he was talking about. I say, "You get your ass off of there, and I'll take over. I'm late, I'm 30 minutes late." He said, "You're not supposed to be late." I say, "I told you yesterday, my wife has been sick, carrying this baby." So he said something smart to me and I knocked him flat on. [laughs]

1-00:33:27

Washburn:

With some boxing skills, huh?

1-00:33:30

Arnold:

I was a dirty fighter too. I was a better street fighter, I think. I never was beat in the ring either. Anyhow, he was going to take me to court,. So I had to go before the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard guy says, "Did you sign articles yet?" I say, "No, I didn't sign

no articles. I wouldn't have hit him if I'd have been on articles." The guy couldn't do nothing. He had as sore jaw, I know that. So that's when I quit.

1-00:34:03

Washburn:

That's when you quit the Merchant Marines.

1-00:34:05

Arnold:

Yes, I had enough.

1-00:34:06

Washburn:

So you stopped serving for the Merchant Marines in June of '45. And what did you do then to make a living?

1-00:34:29

Arnold:

Well, I couldn't get a job anyplace, because everybody was looking for work, got out of the service. So I used to drink at the Silver Dollar. So I was talking to the guy that owned it, Fred Berthaud. And he said, "Well Jack, I'll break you in as a bartender." He had a good guy there that was a pretty good bartender, who broke me in. So I worked for him.

1-00:34:53

Washburn:

I'm interested in knowing, you said the first time we talked that before you worked at the Silver Dollar, the shipyards were still open in Richmond. Why didn't you get a job working at Kaiser?

1-00:35:18

Arnold:

I don't know. I wasn't a machinist, I wasn't a, steel man. I was a good deck man, I was good at rigging booms and stuff. I was going to get a job at a rigging lot in San Francisco. That's where they bought all the ropes and stuff for the ships. But that was a closed union, and there was no way they would hire a young guy off of the street.

1-00:35:53

Washburn:

Did you find a lot of jobs were like that, when you stopped serving? That they excluded people for certain reasons?

1-00:36:03

Arnold:

Yes.

1-00:36:04

Washburn:

Why would a job exclude somebody like yourself who was looking for work? What are the reasons?

1-00:36:14

Arnold:

Well, it was closed shop. It was [inaudible]. So I went to see some guy from El Cerrito, and he was head of the Painters Union. And he says, "You've got to start from scratch. You've got to be apprenticed." I said, "How come? I was a boatswain! I bought paint, I painted, I had crews working for me, painting the ships when we docked or something, or on hook." "Sorry, I can't let you in the union." So that's when I started working to tend the bar.

1-00:36:50

Washburn:

How did your status as a Merchant Marine affect your ability to find a good job?

1-00:37:01

Arnold:

Well, I don't know if it's good, but bartending is pretty good money. With the tips at that time.

1-00:37:06

Washburn:

No, I mean, how did the fact that you didn't have veteran status affect finding a job?

1-00:37:12

Arnold:

I don't understand.

1-00:37:15

Washburn:

Were certain jobs open to people who were veterans?

1-00:37:20

Arnold:

I wasn't a veteran.

1-00:37:21

Washburn:

That's what I'm saying. So can you describe what it was like, the difference between people who were veterans, and who had served in Merchant Marines, finding work?

1-00:37:34

Arnold:

Oh yes, they take the veterans first.

1-00:37:42

Washburn:

Why did they set it up that way do you think?

1-00:37:45

Arnold:

Well, I wasn't a serviceman. And we lost more people than all of them put together, by percentage. That's the way it goes. That's the way it went—

1-00:38:05

Washburn:

Did people in the Merchant Marines voice that that was unfair?

1-00:38:10

Arnold:

Yes. We did our job. And I was happy to see them put us in there.

1-00:38:22

Washburn:

Do you remember anybody saying things to you about trying to change that at that time, change your status as veterans right then, to get a job?

1-00:38:35

Arnold:

Not to get a job, no. But I wish it had gone through when Roosevelt had it going through Congress. It had to be up to Congress whether to do it.

1-00:38:54

Washburn:

So then, can you tell me the story again how you found work at The Silver Dollar bar?

1-00:39:01

Arnold:

I used to go up there and drink, once and a while. And they were nice people. They had a boy named Bud, a son-in-law named Bob; when they got out of the navy, they come in and took over. So they didn't need me anymore, that's when I went to the Town House.

1-00:39:21

Washburn:

For who you didn't know, can you describe what the bar was like and where it was?

1-00:39:30

Arnold:

It was on San Pablo Avenue. On Knott Street and San Pablo, on the corner. And it was a pretty nice bar. It was old. Working people all working at the shipyards and stores around. Dance with the jukebox. Good old music. [laughs] And it was nice, looked nice.

1-00:40:00

Washburn:

Can you describe the clientele?

1-00:40:05

Arnold:

They were all older than me. I don't know, it was all nice people. Irish family. The Burns family, McKillops. They had a sheet metal shop on the corner from there. His kids were jumping over booths, playing tag. [laughs] And I see the son nowadays, I don't even know who he was, because I met him at the shop. Phil's barbershop. I've seen him a couple of times now. But I would never have recognized him. But they were about my kids' age.

1-00:40:50

Washburn:

Where did the people who came in the Silver Dollar work?

1-00:40:57

Arnold:

The shipyards. Most all of them. They were still building ships, I think, yes, in '45.

1-00:41:11

Washburn:

Did it seem like people had a good amount of money to spend on drinks?

1-00:41:20

Arnold:

Yes. Weren't paying much rent, all were living in war housing, just about. I remember one old gal come in there, she worked at Penney's for—well, she was old then, so she worked for them for 20, 30 years, I imagine. She had her booze everyday. I forget her name. Florence something. But nice people.

1-00:41:55

Washburn:

Can you describe what Friday nights were like there? Try to describe what the scene was like there, at the Silver Dollar.

1-00:42:09

Arnold:

Well the jukebox was going like crazy, and there was dancing. Everybody doing their own dance.

1-00:42:24

Washburn:

How would you describe how much people drank?

1-00:42:30

Arnold:

Well, they could still walk, when they left. [laughs] Because you're not supposed to serve a drunk, you know? But they had a good time. They had enough I think. When it was crowded, I think there was twenty stools at the bar, and booths around the edge, the outside wall. And they were full, especially Friday night. That was our busiest day. Any bar would be, I think, at that time.

1-00:43:05

Washburn:

Were there other bars nearby to the Silver Dollar?

1-00:43:09

Arnold:

Yes. Up the street was Todd's and the other way was Palm Gardens, Potrero and San Pablo. The Forum was still there, where it is now, and there was another little bar across the street, too, I can't think of where it was. Around the corner, at that time, it was Little Angie's. And across the street that corner, Potrero, and San Pablo, was the Corner Bar,

up the street was Bank Club, the It Club, Corner Club, then the Albany Club, in Albany. And there were some more bars in between them but I can't think of them. Oh, Jack's Club was there.

1-00:44:22

Washburn:

So a lot of the clubs and bars were really close to each other. Would people walk back and forth from one bar to the next? Or did people stay kind of regular?

1-00:44:33

Arnold:

No, there were regular customers. Yes, they were regular. See them all the time. Everybody had their favorite spot, I think.

1-00:44:49

Washburn:

What did people say was nice about the Silver Dollar? Why did they like going there?

1-00:44:53

Arnold:

They all liked Fred, he was a pretty nice old guy. And his family was all nice. And he ran a nice place.

1-00:45:11

Washburn:

So you started there in the summer of '45, you started working there. What are some of your best memories about that summer, working there? Probably a lot, but—

1-00:45:29

Arnold:

I don't know, I can't remember now. I enjoyed it—

1-00:45:34

Washburn:

And so, as the bartender, did you kind of come to know all the people who came in there?

1-00:45:40

Arnold:

Oh, it didn't take me long. And they liked me.

1-00:45:49

Washburn:

Hey, can you tell me some stories about some of the folks there, in that year?

1-00:45:54

Arnold:

Well, I can remember one. Something happened to the gal who run the dice table. So, I said "I'll do it, I'll run it." I worked the day shift, at that time. So I'm there, playing this dice game, I forget what they called it, and this big son-of-a-gun, his brother-in-law run the store, Andrew's Grocery, down the street. And this big son-of-a-gun grabs me by the tie and take me outside. [laughs] I'm on my tiptoes, you know, "What the hell you

doing?” He says “You cheated me. My brother-in-law said you cheated me.” I says “I don’t cheat nobody. It’s not my money. Win it, take it, that’s what I’m here for. See that the game’s played right, you know?” So we get outside, and, I thought “Well, I gotta do something.” Great big Swede from, Minnesota, I guess he was from. So I come up off my knee, got him in his knockers. And he come over like this, and I come up with my knee again and caught him under the chin and whoosh, down he goes.

1-00:47:08

Washburn:

Wow.

1-00:47:09

Arnold:

So I come back in, and everybody thought, “Jeez, Jack’s gonna die out there.” Nobody come out to help me. I walk in, I says, “Come here, Ray. Goddamn you you’re next.” And he looked at me, “What did you do to my brother-in-law?” I said “I beat the shit out of him, that’s what I did. He had no reason to pick me up and take me outside.” People never forgot that too, you know, they knew I could handle myself.

1-00:47:35

Washburn:

That was the first summer you worked there.

1-00:47:41

Arnold:

Yes. And the guy showed up the next morning, Fred says, “What the hell did you do to that guy?” So I told him the story you. He says, “Yes, he deserved what you gave him.”

1-00:47:51

Washburn:

Describe, there was gambling there at the bar. Describe what kinds of gambling there were.

1-00:47:58

Arnold:

Well it was just a dice game, I forget what they called it. Like you pick out a six, so if there are more sixes in three rolls, then you got so much money for it. I forget what they called it. High dice or something like that. And then they had slot machines in the back room too. I think he had three slot machines back there. And they paid off, they were loaded all the time. Not going back into gambling. And he made quite a bit of money on the machines.

1-00:48:35

Washburn:

So who was doing the gambling at the bar. Who was playing the games?

1-00:48:41

Arnold:

Oh just anybody could come in off the street.

1-00:48:47

Washburn:

You didn't have to know somebody special to do it.

1-00:48:50

Arnold:

Well maybe the machines, the slot machines, maybe. But I don't know, about that. This dice game, well, the woman run it easily. I guess she was sick that day or something. And I took it over.

1-00:49:09

Washburn:

How did people have the money to be gambling like that?

1-00:49:13

Arnold:

Working in shipyards, working for grocery stores. And drinks were, pretty much, I think it was a dollar and a half for a good drink, at that time. And call booze I think was two dollars or something.

1-00:49:37

Washburn:

So do you remember knowing who worked where by how much money they had, or what kind of clothes they wore?

1-00:49:45

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes. A lot of used car guys, the new car guys, come in, salesmen. And I knew most of them. From the bar, you know. In fact I bought a couple of new cars from one guy. [laughs]

1-00:50:01

Washburn:

I want to see if you can help me make a connection between how much money people had and the fact that everybody had jobs. Can you help me make that connection?

1-00:50:16

Arnold:

They was making money so they had to spend it I guess. [laughs] That's all I really know. And the car dealers were I guess the liveliest of them. I don't know how they got paid. Commission maybe. And the real estate people, we had quite a few of those guys. In fact my grandson's married to Billy Burke, his granddaughter. And they were big wheels in the real estate business. [inaudible] And most of them that I knew were from out of state. The local people couldn't see the forest for the trees. {Jule Bleihemer} was from North Dakota. Very, very good. Made lots of money. This guy from Oklahoma, I can't remember his name. Lived up the hill in a great big house; but he's been gone for a long time too. Dead. He was from Oklahoma. Most of them that were successful were from out of town.

1-00:51:47

Washburn:

Why do you think?

1-00:51:48

Arnold:

Oh, they could see. The sales. The local people didn't care. But from out of state, you could tell, they knew, that this place was gonna get bigger and bigger and bigger. And they were successful.

1-00:52:14

Washburn:

I want to talk to you about the gambling. So the gambling wasn't legal at the time?

1-00:52:28

Arnold:

No, never was. Where the Eagles is at now was the Wagon Wheel; gambling downstairs, girls upstairs. [laughs] "The 'ors', my son used to say, "the 'ors'."

1-00:52:51

Washburn:

How did the Wagon Wheel and the Silver Dollar get away with having gambling around?

1-00:52:58

Arnold:

Well, they had to get along. The Silver Dollar had no girls upstairs.

1-00:53:31

Washburn:

Did the police officers or the sheriffs know what was going on in these places?

1-00:53:40

Arnold:

Oh sure, yes. El Cerrito cops, I knew them all, oh, they knew. Sure. And the sheriff, his guys, his hand was just out once a month. Come by to see how you doing. Sheriff Long, was his name. I was telling you, the Kefauver association, and he was next on the list, but they run out of time, so he never—

1-00:54:15

Washburn:

Describe that, what was the Kefauver investigation?

1-00:54:18

Arnold:

For taxes. People didn't pay taxes. Especially the gambling. I can't remember the guy's name, but he was the head of all the wineries up in the valley and all over California. When he threw a party, he said, "How can you afford at" He says, "I'm no chimp." He says, "When I put a party, I spend four or five thousand dollars." And he meant it! But I think they nailed him for taxes so—

1-00:54:53

Washburn:

So why did the police or the sheriffs, clean up in Richmond then?

1-00:54:56

Arnold:

What?

1-00:54:57

Washburn:

Why in the end did the sheriffs and the police clean up in Richmond?

1-00:55:01

Arnold:

Well, a new regime come in, and promise to clean it up. I know at the Elk's Club, I belonged there, they must have had ten of them; quarters, half dollars machines. Slot machines. So when they close up, they put a thing over them and it look like a wall. Very well hidden. But you know, like the pools, football pools, hundred dollar pools. Put a hundred, win ten thousand. But the sheriff, district attorney, they all had their names on the boards, you know. Once and a while they'd pick it up and run these pools. But they knew they were there.

1-00:55:55

Washburn:

People say that when you were working at the Silver Dollar that was El Cerrito police. Did you notice that the police force got bigger, as years went on, to compensate for all the people that moved into town?

1-00:56:17

Arnold:

Yes. It got bigger all the time. Ray Carlson was a detective . Marino {Soldarini}, he was a cop. Gene Guidiu, he was a cop, his one arm guy. I guess he lost it in the war. It had some women too. Not too many women, at that time. I think there was one.

1-00:56:58

Washburn:

Was there any disruptions, that you can remember between shipyard workers at the Silver Dollar, or in bars around? Other than what you were involved in, was there any fights or violence like that?

1-00:57:15

Arnold:

Yes, once and awhile, yes. At the Silver Dollar was—What the hell was his name? Tommy Thompson, Good friend of mine. Big guy. Husky guy. So my wife and I, were having a drink in a booth, and one of these guys popped off to me, and he heard it, this guy. And they were sitting at the bar, and he goes like this, knocked their heads together and threw them on the floor. [laughs] Cause they figured, he's gonna hurt me, you know. What a good customer. Tommy Thompson was his name. Not the guy that's the Secretary of Labor now, but—another Tommy Thompson.

1-00:58:02

Washburn:

No, no. Right.

1-00:58:11

Arnold:

It was just nice people. Frank somebody. His wife was pregnant. He worked for the phone company. And I was sitting at the end of the bar, and this one navy guy come up and started getting smart with her. And Frank wouldn't do nothing. I says, "Listen Frank. Let me at the son-of-a-bitch." So I knocked him flat on his ass, and I told the other guy, I say "You take him and get your ass out of here. Or I'll get you." [laughs] They took off. And that Frank loved me ever since.

1-00:58:50

Washburn:

Did certain bars have reputations for being rougher than others?

1-00:58:59

Arnold:

Well, yes. I was in one in San Diego. San Pedro. And that thing would get remodeled every three months, or every three weeks. [laughs] The Merchant Marines used to hit there. Everybody would get gassed up, at that place. Bucket of Blood, they called it.

1-00:59:26

Washburn:

What were some of the places in the Richmond/El Cerrito area that had a rougher reputation?

1-00:59:32

Arnold:

I really don't know. Because I wasn't looking for them. But I will never forget that Bucket of Blood down in San Pedro. They remodeled that place, I don't know how many times.

1-00:59:47

Washburn:

What did people wear when they came into the Silver Dollar?

1-00:59:54

Arnold:

It was dressed up. Especially Friday nights, they had on their suits. Not too many ties. And they made pretty good money, I guess, wherever they worked. And Fred belonged to the Richmond Golf Course, so he had friends out there who would come—

2-00:00:28

Washburn:

So, I wanted to try and focus as best we can on when the shipyards closed, and how that affected business at the Silver Dollar, or if it did at all. What do you remember about the shipyards' losing while working at the Silver Dollar bar?

2-00:00:55

Arnold:

Well, I don't remember when they closed now, but Willamette shipyard took it over, from Kaiser. And I knew all the big wheels there. I was working at Louie's Club at that time. All the foremen, the big wheels would come, for lunch, and after work they would hit the—Sunday mornings they called me Dr. Arnold. I made them fizz. [laughs] The fizz is, Royal Fizz, you know. Brandy, egg. "Dr. Arnold, fix me up."

2-00:01:34

Washburn:

To cure the hangover.

2-00:01:36

Arnold:

Yes, yes.

2-00:01:37

Washburn:

So you were working at the Silver Dollar through '45?

2-00:01:43

Arnold:

When the boys got out of the service, they took over. Fred's son and son-in-law. And of course I had to go because the boys' spot to be in. So that's when I went to work at the Townhouse, which is on 10th Street. Not next to the Elk's Club. The Elks' was on the corner. Big building. And they owned that building, the Elks did. And then, who was it, Albert's come to town, and he bought the whole property, which the Townhouse was at. So that's when they closed it down, and I figured it would take two months to do it, build the building and fix up the Townhouse.

2-00:02:40

Washburn:

So when did you move from the Silver Dollar to the Townhouse?

2-00:02:45

Arnold:

Some time in '45. And then, that's when I sold my house, on 50th Street. Let's see, what did I pay for that? I think I paid forty-eight hundred for it, this brick house, the first house I bought, where we lived. From the apartments. And I think we paid forty-eight hundred, twenty-eight dollars a month payments. Some guy next to me worked at Mare Island. He says, "Jack you better sell, everything's going to go down!" So he sold, I waited a little while, and I sold for eight-something thousand. So that's, we went on vacation in Colorado. Because I was going to come back, and open up the new Townhouse Bar.

2-00:04:49

Washburn:

So the boys got out of service, sometime in '45. And you had to find a new job. How did you find work down at the Townhouse?

2-00:04:57

Arnold:

They heard about me. Honest, good bouncer. [laughs] Anyhow, I went back to Colorado on vacation.

2-00:05:18

Washburn:

For who?

2-00:05:18

Arnold:

Townhouse, after remodeling. Albert's was building this place. So after awhile I thought, well hell, I just, back here, I might as well buy a place while I'm here you know, I had some money. Sold the house on 50th Street. So, this place was for sale, between [Walsenberg] and [LaVida], called "The Halfway House." And it was an after-hours joint. So I bought it, and it did pretty good. Dances on Friday and Saturday nights. Filled it up. These guys uptown, got jealous, that them all come out and drink at my place, you know? The owners of these other bars in [Walsenberg]. So, they called up the ABC people and closed me down. It was twelve o'clock, I'd close. Like it was here too, was twelve. Until, I think it was July, the summer of '45 that they took that off and you could stay open until two. But before that, you had to close at twelve. But there were after-hours joints here too.

2-00:06:37

Washburn:

Describe what an after-hours joint is. Kind of a simple question, but what's an after-hours joint?

2-00:06:47

Arnold:

Well, you're supposed to close at twelve, you stay open until two! You get all the drunks and [laughs] people having a good time, and they don't want to go home at twelve. That's when you make the money. So that's what happened back there. So her dad was a great politician back there. County Assessor for four terms. And he says, "Come on, we'll go to Denver. I know the people. Go up there and get another license." So I come back, and the snow's the worst that they had in fifty years. So that closed me up. The snow jobs. That's when they push hay in the airplanes and herd the cattle and deer, drop bales of hay, so they could eat. I mean, it was deep. So then I come back to El Cerrito and—That's when I went to work down at the Mauna Club.

2-00:08:04

Washburn:

Did you not work at the Townhouse first? You worked at the Mauna before the Townhouse?

2-00:08:08

Arnold:

No. When I come back from Colorado.

2-00:08:10

Washburn:

When did you work at the Townhouse?

2-00:08:13

Arnold:

'45. From the Silver Dollar to there.

2-00:08:16

Washburn:

Yes, I wanted to talk a little bit about the difference. Because the Townhouse, where was the Townhouse located?

2-00:08:23

Arnold:

Between Macdonald, on 10th Street and Nevin, on the west side of 10th Street.

2-00:08:33

Washburn:

How was it different from the Silver Dollar? I mean, it was different location, but what was the clientele like?

2-00:08:40

Arnold:

Oh it was good clientele. Lawyers, doctors. And the bus stop in front of the place. Shipyard workers, everybody come in, going home drinks and stuff. It was good; it was a nice place. All of the Elks people, would hit there before going up. And they had a nice bar at the Elks', too. Besides their slot machines. [laughs]

2-00:09:10

Washburn:

So if you walked into the Townhouse, what was the layout like, what was it like? Tables or booths, what was it like?

2-00:09:18

Arnold:

Well, walking in, there was a liquor store right there. George Baldwin run the liquor store. And there was a big bar, nice bar. Must have had about thirty stools on it. And then on the other side was narrow, but they had booths. And we had some fisticuffs in there once and awhile too.

2-00:09:40

Washburn:

What are fisticuffs?

2-00:09:41

Arnold:

Fights. Not too bad but—

2-00:09:45

Washburn:

At the Silver Dollar, was it mostly white that came into the Silver Dollar?

2-00:10:03

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes. At that time, there were Indians. You weren't supposed to feed Indians.

2-00:10:10

Washburn:

You weren't supposed to give liquor to Indians.

2-00:10:13

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:10:14

Washburn:

Why is that?

2-00:10:15

Arnold:

Because they couldn't handle the booze. And it was a law that, I don't know if it was a law, but if a guy was covered, said "Hey you're an Indian, you can't drink in here." Didn't treat them nice, at that time. Of course I grew up since then so I know, I was wrong.

2-00:10:36

Washburn:

Well how would you know who was an Indian and who wasn't an Indian?

2-00:10:40

Arnold:

I just said if you're black you're an Indian. Made them feel good, they'd "No, I'm an Indian." Refuse them.

2-00:11:02

Washburn:

So there was a law on the books saying, you can't serve to Indians.

2-00:11:07

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:11:08

Washburn:

So who would you classify was Indians or non-Indians?

2-00:11:12

Arnold:

Well, you weren't that black?

2-00:11:16

Washburn:

So if somebody was darker skinned, you'd just say, "I can't serve to Indians."

2-00:11:20

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:11:22

Washburn:

And what would they say in response to you?

2-00:11:24

Arnold:

Oh I don't know. I can't think of it.

2-00:11:27

Washburn:

Well would they say like, maybe, "I'm not Indian"?

2-00:11:31

Arnold:

Yes, but. We didn't get too many.

2-00:11:32

Washburn:

But they get the idea.

2-00:11:35

Arnold:

They got the idea, yes. But there was other bars where they hung out, I guess. Down Macdonald, west Macdonald. And North Richmond, they had their own places there. Bars.

2-00:11:53

Washburn:

Well, you know, as I interview people in the Mexican community there was a lot of Mexican folks who lived down, by the Townhouse, by 10th Street. Did you have Mexican folks coming in to The Townhouse sometimes?

2-00:12:05

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes. We had some good friends down that way. Especially around St. Mark's Church. Quite a few. They all worked at Standard Oil, most of them. Laborers. [Joselaya], he was an electrician out there.

2-00:12:27

Washburn:

So, but you'd serve the Mexican folks?

2-00:12:31

Arnold:

Yes, yes.

2-00:12:34

Washburn:

Interesting. So, was the clientele that was down at the Townhouse, would you describe it as any different from what was up at the Silver Dollar?

2-00:12:45

Arnold:

Yes, well its more professional people went there. In the mornings, McCracken's, store. Clothing store, real nice store, for a men's store. Across the street from him was Johnson's. Harold and Clarence Johnson. Brothers. Nice store. They would meet at the Townhouse. And Joe Piano, the guy who I was talking about he had liquor. There'd be about four or five of them. And they'd meet down there and have coffee, and booze. Every morning they'd be there. The city fathers of Richmond in that time.

2-00:13:43

Washburn:

So it was a very, seemed like a pretty reputable place.

2-00:13:47

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:13:49

Washburn:

Was there a difference in what you were making, from the—

2-00:13:57

Arnold:

Silver Dollar? No, same. We were union. That's the only place that I've ever worked that I didn't get more than union pay was the Townhouse. I got over paid, I kept all my tips, you know.

2-00:14:17

Washburn:

Well that's how it is for every place. So was there gambling also at the Townhouse?

2-00:14:21

Arnold:

No. No machines there. Like I said, the bus would stop right in front. But they had them up at the Elks, right on the corner. And I don't think the rest of them down there had it either. The Hub, I don't think they had any machines. That was Bill Louis's place. And then he sold out and had a liquor store on 23rd. And after there he bought a friend of mines', the Rancho, down on San Pablo Dam Road. You know where that is? He bought that place.

2-00:14:58

Washburn:

Why don't you think there were any machines at the Townhouse, and there were some at the Silver Dollar?

2-00:15:03

Arnold:

I don't know. I think, well, hell, the chief of police was probably not fooled, and he knew they was having them up. District Attorney, he played, up there. Still, they had them at the Elks'. Of course that's a closed club. That's probably why. [Inaudible] owned it, at that time. [inaudible] owned it again.

2-00:15:51

Washburn:

Did the people who were coming into the Townhouse, did you notice any talk about, people losing jobs, who were coming in there? Did some regulars, who came in, stop buying so many drinks because they didn't have the same amount of money, or—

2-00:16:09

Arnold:

I think, no, uh-uh. The Ford Plant was open at that time, and a lot of people from there used to come to the Townhouse. A dozen of people worked there. Retired, old people, you know. Still working up there. Not now, but I mean, at that time. The Ford Plant was still working then, down by the waterfront. I see they're going to try to make a museum or something like that.

2-00:16:42

Washburn:

[inaudible] a redevelopment somehow.

2-00:16:50

Arnold:

That's—And a lot of shipyard people come there too, with their hard hats, all dressed up with their hard hats. [inaudible] I used to get a bang of that. One day, come over, he says, "I don't know whether they're going to fail me out there," he'd been working there for six months, never cashed a check. He didn't know what a check was.. I say, "Well, we get paid by check." He says, "What's that for?" He says, "You can just go to the bank and they'll cash it for you." He didn't know. Some Okie, you know, from Arkansas. He didn't know what a check was. [laughs] Never had them. Sure he had a stack of checks.

2-00:17:46

Washburn:

So how was he getting by, you think?

2-00:17:48

Arnold:

He's spending his money from when he left home, saved money. He said, "I'm about to run out of money. He didn't know when gonna get paid." That was true. There's a lot of dumb guys like that at that time.

2-00:18:07

Washburn:

Yes, I've heard stories like that, too. Yes, a lot of stories like that. Did you get to know any shipyard workers pretty well?

2-00:18:21

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes. Especially when I went up [inaudible].

2-00:18:37

Washburn:

Could you tell who, when they came to the bar, it seemed like a little bit of a different culture than it is now. When were the popular hours to come in and have a drink?

2-00:18:52

Arnold:

I always had a full house when I come to work, and that was six o'clock. So I probably got there at four or five. There was two guys working behind the bar. That was the only place that had two guys working. It should have been a lot of places that should have had two guys, would have made more money. Back at Louis, it should have helped me out, just a little help, you know. That's how it was, back and forth, back and forth, run, run, run. Full house in the bar, backrooms are full. [inaudible]

2-00:19:52

Washburn:

Well how did you-- Did you know who at the townhouse was? Could you tell by the way they dressed? Where they worked?

2-00:20:04

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:20:04

Washburn:

How could you tell?

2-00:20:05

Arnold:

Well, I could tell. I knew, anyway, most of the bigwigs at Standard Oil. And the girls next door, one of them, had a beauty parlor. They were always coming in after working hours, having a toddy. In the corner was the lagoon, the got bath flowers there. That was like a south island place; palm trees, big fish, rich guys.

2-00:21:02

Washburn:

You were saying how could you--folks came in suits and real nice clothes and all?

2-00:21:31

Arnold:

I just knew it. That's the way they dressed, anyway. Those guys are like today.

2-00:21:42

Washburn:

People used to get pretty spiffed up, huh?

2-00:21:43

Arnold:

Yes, especially all the bosses got dressed up pretty good out there. They're big wheels.

00:21:52

Washburn:

But they didn't live there by The Townhouse, did they?

2-00:21:55

Arnold:

I don't know where they lived. In Richmond.

2-00:22:01

Washburn:

Like Mira Vista or something?

2-00:22:01

Arnold:

Yes. The Johnson boys they lived up the hill that way. McCracken, I don't where in the world he lived. His wife, she owned The Rancho.[inaudible]. He opened the Horseshoe up in[inaudible] and I guess he's still there. I don't know, he's probably dead by now, for four or five years. In fact he and his wife, at that time, worked together at The Townhouse. We all had kids at about the same time, so everybody was kidless when we decided to have a big party. My boy was born in August and she had a boy that was born in December or close to there and Pete had a baby at about the same time. All three of us had a baby at about the same time.

2-00:23:38

Washburn:

Well, I think that's about as much as I was thinking about talking about today. Because we've already talked for about a half an hour or so. Could we meet at another time, maybe in a couple of weeks or so?

2-00:23:58

Arnold:

Yes, sure.

2-00:24:00

Washburn:

Do it again?

2-00:24:00

Arnold:

Yes.

2-00:24:01

Washburn:

Because I really didn't prepare my past talking about The Townhouse, so I'd like to, you know, write some things down. Hopefully next time I can bring in some photos like this or maybe you guys can dig up some photos, too.

2-00:24:16

Arnold:

Yes, see if she can find some.

[End interview 1]

Interview with Jack Arnold:

Interviewed by: David Washburn

Transcriber: Erik Fuehrer

[Interview #2: February, 23, 2003]

[Begin Audio File Arnold:3 02-23-03]

3-00:00:06

Washburn:

This is the track one on the mini-disc. Okay, that sounds good. We are back again. So, it is—what is the date today?

3-00:00:23

Arnold:

The 22nd, I don't know.

3-00:00:26

Washburn:

I think today is Sunday, I think the 23rd.

3-00:00:30

Arnold:

That sounds right.

3-00:00:32

Washburn:

And we are recording an interview, second interview, with Jack Arnold: in El Cerrito, California and my name is David Washburn.

3-00:00:44

Arnold:

I had an aunt and uncle, they lived in Washburn, and they lived in North Dakota.

3-00:00:49

Washburn:

It is a fairly common name.

3-00:00:51

Arnold:

Washburn?

3-00:00:52

Washburn:

Yes.

3-00:00:54

Arnold:

Well, Bismarck.

3-00:00:56

Washburn:

There's a town called Washburn?

3-00:00:58

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:00:57

Washburn:

Oh really?

3-00:00:59

Arnold:

Yes. I have never been up there, but when I was a little kid she used to come and visit us.

3-00:01:04

Washburn:

There was an explorer, Washburn the explorer who—so, he came I think out that way through—he ended up in Yellowstone at some point. So, that could be exactly what they named it after. So, I listened to our last interview, and there are some things, which I didn't think we talked about too much, but that's how it goes all the time. And, so I wrote down an outline of what I would like to talk about. And a big part of it, actually, would be the bartender's union, but we will get to that because I think that's—people are kind of interested in what was going on in Richmond with the unions at that time and I also want to say because of the limitations of how—I mean, we could talk about what you have done in Richmond and El Cerrito into the seventies, but because we are trying to focus more on the forties and fifties, I don't think we will go much past the fifties or so, mid-fifties. Well, I guess we could start off, and one thing we didn't really talk about, and I was hoping you could help shed some light on this was—you are from Iowa and moved out to Richmond. When you were here, what did you sense it was like being a—being from another state and living here? Mostly meaning being a newcomer in a town that was not your own.

3-00:02:45

Arnold:

Yes, well, I was only here to change clothes in between ships. That's when I was settled a little bit, and then it was forty-three. And we found my dad who was somebody's garage and he worked in Alaska and would come down here after he finished a job up there, and he worked as a glazier in the shipyards, until he fell out of a truck and broke his hip, and put pins in it. That was all of his shipyard work. Then he was laid up till he died with cancer. And that was in '45, he passed away I think it was. And that's when I went to work at the Townhouse '45. The old Townhouse on 10th Street, between Macdonald and Nevin.

3-00:03:54

Washburn:

Well, how much contact did you have with people who were natives of Richmond?

3-00:04:02

Arnold:

Well, they were customers. All of them were good customers. I had a guy come in there once from Oklahoma or back in the south some place, and he says, "I'm running out of money." I say, "Well, hell you are working all the time, how come you are running out of money?" I says, "Don't you have checks?" He said, "Well, I got a stack of something like this." And a stack of them like this, he says. And he didn't know to cash them. He didn't get paid, he got paid all right, but he didn't know how to cash them. So, I told him what to do. Get a bank account, and then start yourself a little kitty on the side. So, that's—that was funny. Everybody comes in all dressed up, but they had a hardhat on. Let them know I am an old shipyard worker. I made a lot of—and then we got a lot of Standard Oil people there too.

3-00:05:10

Washburn:

So, did they—why were they wearing their hats you think?

00:05:09

Arnold:

Well, it was a shipyard thing. You had to put a hardhat on to go through the gate I guess. Of course, we didn't wear one ourselves.

00:05:21

Washburn:

Did it seem like it was a matter of pride for the people?

00:05:27

Arnold:

I guess a matter of pride. We used to get a kick out of them all dressed up with the tie and a hardhat on. [laughs]

3-00:05:29

Washburn:

Wait explain that again. How were they dressed?

3-00:05:36

Arnold:

All dressed up in a suit and a tie and a nice clean shirt, with a hardhat. I always got a kick out of it.

3-00:05:45

Washburn:

Seems to be like you're mixing two things. Mixing looking good and kind of industrial work.

3-00:05:55

Arnold:

I guess. Like a Texan always wore his cowboy hat and the boots. "I'm from Texas." I had a brother that way from Iowa. Always had a two hundred-dollar hat and a two hundred-dollar pair of boots. He never rode a horse.

3-00:06:16

Washburn:

Did you notice that—could you tell where people were from by the way they dressed when they came into the bar? Did you notice some regional styles?

3-00:06:21

Arnold:

No, you could hear them talk, and I could tell where they come from. Oklahoma, or Arkansas, or Texas.

3-00:06:33

Washburn:

Yes, how would—I am not so familiar so how would you tell a person is from Texas rather than Oklahoma?

3-00:06:38

Arnold:

You all. There is another saying they used to say all the time, I can't remember what it is now, but they all say the same thing. I can't remember now what it was, but this guy has got to be from Texas.

3-00:06:59

Washburn:

They had just a regional way of speaking?

3-00:07:02

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:07:09

Washburn:

What about from Iowa? Did you guys have a—could you tell—did anybody ever say "I know where you are from, you must be from Iowa?"

3-00:07:17

Arnold:

No, we talked just like I am talking now. Not too bright, but I can talk through a good conversation.

3-00:07:29

Washburn:

So, there wasn't—you know, in some ways in the history I read, there seem to be kind of a, not a stigma, but people sometimes look down on people from Oklahoma and Texas. Is that true?

3-00:07:43

Arnold:
Yes. Yes.

3-00:07:44

Washburn:
Why was that?

3-00:07:42

Arnold:
I have no idea. And like from Boston, I sailed with guys who were always “Boston” or “Harvard”, stuff like that. My grandmother must of—she come from back east somewhere because she used to say “Harvard.” Funny little thing in her speech.

3-00:08:10

Washburn:
Well, did you meet any other Iowans out here? Did you meet any other Iowans in Richmond?

3-00:08:16

Arnold:
Not too many. No. A couple in the apartment house, I think one lady there, her family was from Iowa. A friend of my mother’s in housing where everybody lived, I guess. The shipyards, the warehousing, and along Cutting Boulevard. That’s where I met my wife in between ships. A few weeks later we were married. It won’t last six months, but we are still fifty-eight years now.

3-00:08:47

Washburn:
That’s great. So, but for you, being from Iowa, you didn’t—did you search out other people from Iowa as a matter of just feeling comfortable knowing somebody else was from the same state as you?

3-00:09:03

Arnold:
No, I never. Like Colorado through, everybody that came out here to the shipyards, they had Colorado names or [inaudible] more down by Long Beach or that area. That area, that’s where if you want to get with all Iowans once a year, you go down there and meet. But I never did go.

3-00:09:29

Washburn:
Well, no describe that. So, there are different—in Richmond, they had different days of like gatherings for each state?

3-00:09:34

Arnold:
I guess they did.

3-00:09:38

Washburn:

Well, how did you know about the Iowan day?

3-00:09:40

Arnold:

Well, I heard about it from somebody, I don't know. But there was—I don't know where. No, let's see, I don't know anybody from Iowa that was here, really.

3-00:09:57

Washburn:

Your wife mentioned, or no, her uncle mentioned, who was from Colorado also, mentioned the Colorado Club. That there was like a club of people from Colorado.

3-00:10:09

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:10:07

Washburn:

Do you remember that?

3-00:10:09

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:10:11

Washburn:

What do you remember about the Colorado Club?

3-00:10:11

Arnold:

Well, like in West Oakland, that's where they all settled in apartments. They worked for the shipyards. Everybody worked for the shipyards, and [inaudible] where she come from. And there must have been five or six families that she went to school with that knew each other. But I don't think that she ever went to any of the Colorado get-togethers.

3-00:10:42

Washburn:

Oh, she didn't?

3-00:10:42

Arnold:

Her folks either.

3-00:10:49

Washburn:

Well, what do you—I want to talk a little bit about the local versus newcomer dynamic at the Townhouse. Were the clientele mostly people who—well, I assume the clientele was mostly people who weren't from Richmond, who were newcomers to Richmond?

3-00:11:14

Arnold:

Yes, I would say so.

3-00:11:17

Washburn:

Did you have some locals who were there, who were from Richmond?

3-00:11:21

Arnold:

Oh yes. A lot of them from Standard Oil.

3-00:11:21

Washburn:

So, how would you know that they were from Richmond?

3-00:11:28

Arnold:

Well, just talking to them. Just making conversation across the bar. I work at Standard Oil and this and that.

3-00:11:45

Washburn:

Did they ever express to you their thoughts about all these people coming into their town and stuff?

3-00:11:46

Arnold:

No, they knew the shipyards were here, and there weren't enough Richmond people to do the job, I guess. They hired them too, the Richmond people.

3-00:12:09

Washburn:

Well, why do you think that is? It seems like if I lived in a town and all these new people came into my town, I would feel a little bit like my life was being invaded a little bit, you know.

3-00:12:21

Arnold:

They probably thought that way, they probably did. I don't know. I knew the McCrackens, store for men, good clothes. Across the street was the Johnson Brothers. Harold Johnson and Clarence I think his name—and they had a nice store, men store. George [inaudible] had the CCC Café right next to McCracken's.

3-00:12:52

Washburn:

These guys were all local?

3-00:12:53

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:13:02

Washburn:

Do you think it had something to do maybe with that the country was at war and everybody was—that people who lived in Richmond maybe were patriotic and didn't want to express that having the shipyards here was ruining their town?

3-00:13:22

Arnold:

No, I don't think so. In fact, those people made Richmond. There's more people from out of town than there was, and a lot them wound up on the council. Through the years.

3-00:13:39

Washburn:

Well, you know, I have also thought that a lot of the people who lived here, like the people you described became really rich from the folks who moved here.

3-00:13:48

Arnold:

Yes. I know the real estate people, [inaudible] was one and I have to think of the name of his outfit, but he come from North Dakota. The guy from Oklahoma, he was about next to the [inaudible] in real estate business, and the local people couldn't see the forest from the trees or the trees from the forest, you know. But these guys could see, buy this property, buy this property, sell this, sell that. Ended up very wealthy. Both of these guys did. Couldn't see the forest from the trees.

3-00:14:29

Washburn:

Why do you think that was?

3-00:14:36

Arnold:

Because they were from out of town, and they could see what was going on. The local people just went along, paid their taxes.

3-00:15:20

Washburn:

So, you are saying that the folks from out of town were the more entrepreneurial?

3-00:15:22

Arnold:

Yes, yes. That's a good word. [laughs]

3-00:15:25

Washburn:

Yes, go to college, gotta learn something right? You know, we didn't talk about you buying your home. You said—well let me, let's—you can repeat. Where did you buy your home in Richmond?

3-00:15:45

Arnold:

It was on 50th Street, right off Cutting. And I think it was another 51st, and I sold because that's where the freeway was going through, and so they bought all that property to put the on-ramp there.

3-00:16:03

Washburn:

So, what—

3-00:16:00

Arnold:

I paid forty-two five for the house, and this neighbor worked at Mare Island in Vallejo. He said, "Jack, you gotta sell your house because real estate is going to go down." So, he sold his, and I waited for another year and I doubled my, forty-two five, and I sold it for eight something. Which was pretty big at that time. I was paying twenty –eight dollars a month payments.

3-00:16:33

Washburn:

Why do you think he said it was going to go down?

3-00:16:37

Arnold:

Because they were closing and wanted to set up in Vallejo, Mare Island, they were closing that down. A submarine base there.

3-00:17:00

Washburn:

How did you—can you describe a little bit about the decision process, you know, why you decided to buy there, and how—whether you got a loan and how all that came to be.

3-00:17:09

Arnold:

Well, it was for sale, so I just bought it. I was still sailing at the time. Making pretty good money. So I put the down payment on it, and I had myself a new house. It wasn't new, but it was pretty much new. Brick house.

3-00:17:35

Washburn:

Did you get a loan for the house?

3-00:17:36

Arnold:

Yes, through FHA. That was my first one.

3-00:17:40

Washburn:

What did they—can you—some people are interested in how the FHA gave out loans to people. What do you remember about getting a loan from them? Did, like for instance, was your status as a Merchant Marine, was that important?

3-00:18:07

Arnold:

Sure, sure. They asked me how much I made, you know, and this and that, and how much the government paid me and how much the civilian people paid us, and my credit was awful good.

3-00:18:50

Washburn:

No big deal. So, how long after marrying your wife did you buy a home?

3-00:19:06

Arnold:

Oh, probably a year. Yes, I think about a year. Because our baby, Jackie, she was born in '45. When I married her, she was beautiful girl, my wife, and beautiful shape.

3-00:19:27

Washburn:

I have seen some pictures, she is beautiful.

3-00:19:32

Arnold:

3-00:20:04

Washburn:

Was that something that—?

3-00:20:03

Arnold:

And then she was born on August 8th. My daughter.

3-00:20:04

Washburn:

Was that something that you felt because your married Irma and because you had a kid, that it was your responsibility to buy a home?

3-00:20:15

Arnold:

Yes, sure.

3-00:20:14

Washburn:

Why was that?

3-00:20:23

Arnold:

Well, we was living with my folks. My youngest sister was living there, and then I put a down payment for them, put them in a house to get them out of the apartments on 16th Street between Roosevelt and Pennsylvania, and we made the payments on them. I took care of them when they passed on, but then the county got all that money. I put her in a rest home, she had a stroke, my mother. My dad had already passed away. That's how they got out of the apartments.

3-00:21:14

Washburn:

And so, what—did you feel—can you explain more about having a family and buying a home, why that was important?

3-00:21:23

Arnold:

I don't know—it was a nice house. The apartments was crowded anyhow because her folks and his brother and his wife was living there also, and my brother-in-law, Benji, he lives in, he's retired, and he was living there at the time. Then, there's another couple, about a block away that she went to school with—a lady, this guy's wife. So, they bought homes as soon as they could I guess.

3-00:22:08

Washburn:

I know this kind of sounds like an obvious question, but you know, it seemed like that was a trend for a lot of people at that time, you know, to start the baby boom generation, you know, marry, have a kid and move into a home.

3-00:22:23

Arnold:

I think so.

3-00:22:28

Washburn:

So, why—it sounds like an obvious question, but why not rent for a while until you find some other place to live?

3-00:22:35

Arnold:

Well, I had the money, so if I thought a while longer, it would have gone up some more. I thought that was a pretty good price to pay for a home, forty-two hundred. Yes, forty-two hundred.

3-00:22:57

Washburn:

So could you explain, how did you have that money to buy the home?

3-00:23:01

Arnold:

I just got paid off from a trip. They paid cash. Money. No checks. I got paid off at eight thousand dollars. That's when I went to New Guinea.

3-00:23:17

Washburn:

So yes explain how that worked. Working for the Merchant Marines, how did the payment—?

3-00:23:22

Arnold:

Well, at that time, it was run by the Commerce Department, and the owners of the shipping line would pay freight that the union said they had to pay. The government would pay the same amount to us. If we got sunk, which I did, we got five hundred dollars extra for that, for killings I guess or something. And if you get a bomb drops close to you, you get another five hundred in the war zone. In fact, we was going into Casablanca, and this tanker hit a mine, and I staring there watching it. It goes up and it went back down. Sunk. And that's before it had the degaussing system on. And these mines would suck it in, you know. So, those guys, well most of them perished on that ship.

3-00:24:33

Washburn:

So, working for the Merchant Marines, you saved money while on the trip, and you would come off and—

3-00:24:35

Arnold:

They gave us an allowance when we hit Brisbane first, and they gave us maybe fifty dollars. But that was subtracted from the payoff. And of course, New Guinea, there was no money there. I mean, you couldn't buy nothing in New Guinea.

3-00:25:00

Washburn:

So coming out of the Merchant Marines, you had saved plenty of money, so you could buy the home?

3-00:25:05

Arnold:

Yes, I could pay cash for it. I thought, what's the matter, twenty-eight dollars a month of payments.

3-00:25:17

Washburn:

What else did you buy at that time? Cars or—?

3-00:25:24

Arnold:

Yes, I had a car. '41 Pontiac Chief, coupe. Bought that about the same time I bought the house, you know.

3-00:25:38

Washburn:

And what about things to fill the home, furniture and—?

3-00:25:40

Arnold:

Tradeway. Went to Tradeway. It's still there on San Pablo Avenue on Carlson. It wasn't used, it was new, but it was scratched here, scratched there. So I bought everything there.

Names Joe something like—he is still there, his dad passed away finally. Nice little Jewish boy. So that's where we bought the furniture.

3-00:26:23

Washburn:

So did other folks you knew from the Merchant Marines also settle in Richmond?

3-00:26:28

Arnold:

No, I didn't know of any of them. They were all around, Sacramento. One guy was from Hawaii, another guy was from Norway. Professional wrestler at one time back in the thirties. I saved his life twice at a theater in Brisbane went to see a show. So, I carried his medicine, and if he passed out, went to a water fountain, get a cup of water and put two drops of this stuff and threw it down his throat and by god it saved him. He had an athletic heart. It was pushing, fat was pushing his heart so it wouldn't beat. They call it an athletic heart. Big son of a gun. In fact, everyday, fifty pound shackle around his neck, doing pull-ups. And he was helping me train to be a fighter too.

3-00:27:27

Washburn:

So, you lost contact with most of these guys after getting out.

3-00:27:28

Arnold:

As soon as I got off the ship, yes. Sometimes we would stay on the same ship, and most of the guys would stay on the ship. But you take time off in between trips, of course, then you got a new crew. There was only thirteen of us on deck, maybe it had two hundred and something, same ship. Everybody getting in everybody's way.

3-00:28:01

Washburn:

And for that reason too, maybe it meant you would have to make friends more?

3-00:28:03

Arnold:

Yes. And thieves, they hired anybody who wanted to go to sea.

3-00:28:18

Washburn:

Who's that?

3-00:28:14

Arnold:

Those companies. Like this Blackie Hernandez. He was black, but I don't know where he got the Portuguese name like that. And Paul {Tolson}, and I went with him in Townsville, Australia. That's where we stopped to go to New Guinea and stopped at a jewelry store. So, we are looking at these diamonds and topaz and sapphires and all these little packages all the same weights. So we are walking out of the place, and Blackie says, "How many of those did you get?" Paul, he says, "I got four." They put them in the cracks of their hands and walked out of the store with them. I wasn't thinking about

doing it myself, but they had walked out with about three or four of these nice gems. I didn't even think about it myself. I wouldn't steal any of it.

3-00:29:23

Washburn:

But, let's—actually, you know, you mentioned that—last time we talked, that over the—this neighborhood that you moved into. It was mostly a white neighborhood?

3-00:29:47

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:29:45

Washburn:

So could you describe—Richmond was pretty segregated at that time.

3-00:29:44

Arnold:

Right.

3-00:29:48

Washburn:

So could you describe what it was like?

3-00:29:52

Arnold:

Well, North Richmond is all black, and the housing is a mix of everything. From down south to Midwest, to Colorado. And what was the question again?

3-00:30:15

Washburn:

How segregated the town was?

3-00:30:19

Arnold:

Well, Richmond was pretty nice on Barrett Street. There are a lot of nice houses along there, still are pretty nice houses on Barrett and Nevin. So there were some nice houses down here, and of course, then they started building up on the hill.

3-00:30:49

Washburn:

But, why do you think there weren't any black people living in the neighborhood that you bought a home in?

3-00:30:51

Arnold:

They probably couldn't afford it, I guess. We had Pat Doyle on one side, an Irishman, married to a Spanish lady, and they were old people. Older than me. He was a painter, retired, and Rosie Doyle, she was just a housewife. And this here people worked at Mare Islands on the other side of us. Across the street was Louisa Bowen was a commie. The

reason I know, I worked for Harris {Swalish} he was Kefauver type of person, you know, trying to catch all the— not the Nazi's, but the Russia—

3-00:31:44

Washburn:
Communists?

3-00:31:43

Arnold:
Communists. So, I take the license number down of a car. I don't know who they were. I gave it to Harold; he called up Sacramento and find out who it was. So, I had to go to court with him and swear under oath that's who it was. So, I carried a gun on me. That's when that's when I worked at the Mauna Club. But, they didn't convict anybody of it. There was one politician who was there, but I am not going to say his name.

3-00:32:29

Washburn:
But this woman who lived across the street from you was a communist?

3-00:32:28

Arnold:
Right, she was the head of the communist organization in this area.

3-00:32:33

Washburn:
What was her name?

3-00:32:34

Arnold:
Louisa Bowen was her name.

3-00:32:37

Washburn:
Louisa Bowen.

3-00:32:32

Arnold:
She was single.

3-00:32:46

Washburn:
How did you know she was involved in all of this?

3-00:32:48

Arnold:
Well, because that's where all the cars would all come for meetings. And I lived across the street from her on 50th. There would be a dozen or so cars in my driveway and everybody else's driveway. They never parked in the street, they parked in my driveway. I don't know what has become of her.

3-00:32:56

Washburn:

Now, how did you know she was—I mean there was obvious that there was activity going on because there were so many people?

3-00:33:16

Arnold:

Well, the reason I know is because of Harris Wallace the attorney. He's gone now. He has been dead for quite awhile.

3-00:33:30

Washburn:

What did he tell you?

3-00:33:28

Arnold:

That she's the head of a commie organization. "Keep working Jack, get those license numbers." He paid me so much.

3-00:33:41

Washburn:

He would pay you to write down the license numbers?

3-00:33:43

Arnold:

Yes. And stick my neck out.

3-00:33:52

Washburn:

And so you said you carried a gun because you were worried that—

3-00:33:56

Arnold:

I was looking out over my shoulder, yes. I had a permit. He got me a permit. That's when they were real bad around here.

3-00:34:16

Washburn:

Yes, what was the—there was a lot of communist activity?

3-00:34:18

Arnold:

Not too much, mostly in labor unions there was. Not in our union there wasn't, but the longshoreman's were at the time. The head of it, I mean. I can't think of his name now. But he was a known commie. Just like this Louisa Bowen was. Everybody knew she was. Funny that name stuck with me.

3-00:34:52

Washburn:

So, she wasn't—she didn't try and keep things in secret?

3-00:35:00

Arnold:

I guess not. She did after I imagine, once they got her and took her to court in Oakland.

3-00:35:12

Washburn:

What do you remember about that court—the kind of what they were trying to convict her of?

3-00:35:19

Arnold:

That she was a known commie. Everybody they brought in there had to be a commie, and this guy was a senator too, a good Democrat.

3-00:35:39

Washburn:

I mean, I know it sounds kind of like an obvious or naïve question, but why was it wrong what she was doing, that she was a communist?

3-00:35:44

Arnold:

Well, the Cold War was in full blossom at that time. They wanted no commie in it. And my brother-in-law, his name was Mike {__}, he's still living. And he was in the army. His brother was in air force. And

3-00:37:15

Washburn:

Murals.

3-00:37:18

Arnold:

Murals. And some high school got the whole white Russian war, all the walls there he painted.

3-00:38:03

Washburn:

So, I mean now that the—it's kind of interesting now because the Cold War is over. It is interesting to think how the—

3-00:38:13

Arnold:

The wall is down.

3-00:38:12

Washburn:

The wall is down. How people thought at that time, about people who were communists or accused of being Communists. Why did you get a gun permit and why were you cautious about being in that neighborhood with that woman?

3-00:38:35

Arnold:

[Narrator excised answer]

3-00:39:04

Washburn:

What about Louisa Bowen? Why were you worried about her in the neighborhood?

3-00:39:05

Arnold:

Well, I didn't care for commie's in the first place, and when I found out through Wallace, I said it was a communist organization and she was the head of it. So I was helping him out. To check their license and find out who they were.

3-00:39:28

Washburn:

I guess more directly, what was dangerous about them, that made you—?

3-00:39:36

Arnold:

Well, they were fighting us, you know. In fact, Patton should have taken the whole damn thing in Berlin, if it hadn't been for Eisenhower he would have. There wouldn't be no East or West or nothing. It would have been—we would have had it. And that was the right thing he should have done, but Eisenhower wouldn't let him take it. But Patton was right. That's why he got killed I think too, in his jeep. I don't know why he was driving a jeep. That's where the [inaudible] was.

3-00:40:19

Washburn:

Well, you mentioned the communist ties and the union activity. Can you describe what the union activity was like in Richmond in 1945 and right after the war?

3-00:40:39

Arnold:

Yes. Well, ours was crooked as hell. Run by one family.

3-00:40:44

Washburn:

Which one's yours? Which one's yours?

3-00:40:46

Arnold:

595 it was called.

3-00:40:50

Washburn:

Which one?

3-00:40:48

Arnold:

Bartenders and Waitresses. And it was run by Marie Sullivan. She was the secretary of treasurer. Her sister was a recording secretary. Her husband was the president and in the agents, the union agents, went around and picked up dues and stuff. He was a cousin to one of them, I forget how. It was all family. And our treasury was always broke. They pretty much ninety percent was union here. In fact, we defeated her in an election, and

the head guy from the union comes from Chicago to make it look like it was real. He was as crooked as she was. Because I stayed here until twelve o'clock at night, pooped, worked all day, and Obie O'Brien, he was with me. I said, "Now, Obie, you stay here until they count all the ballots" because we were so far ahead, they were putting ours to the side and not counting them until they caught up you know. So, in there was a stack this much of our votes, but they didn't count them.

3-00:42:23

Washburn:

This was when you were running for secretary of treasury?

3-00:42:23

Arnold:

Yes. Yes.

3-00:42:22

Washburn:

Well, when you joined the—did you join the union in 1945 when you first started working at the Silver Dollar?

3-00:42:30

Arnold:

Yes. This agent would come around—

3-00:42:33

Washburn:

Yes, can you describe what that was like?

3-00:42:38

Arnold:

Because I got in the union when I was sailing. What the hell is the name of it. It wasn't the SUP. It was from New York. That's where I joined it. And they had an office out of San Francisco also. And well, everybody joined it.

3-00:42:59

Washburn:

You knew starting to bartend you had to join the union.

3-00:43:06

Arnold:

Well, you didn't have to, but I did. I was a union man.

3-00:43:13

Washburn:

Why did you if you didn't have to?

3-00:43:11

Arnold:

Because they were protecting us, I thought. Until this tribe in Richmond start taking us. But, I always was a union man.

3-00:43:29

Washburn:

Why do you say you were a union man? What gave you confidence in the unions?

3-00:43:39

Arnold:

Well, the health thing we had, and—I'd have to have the book. I don't even know where the book is anymore. There were a lot of things the union does for people. Stick together for one thing. They will make your wages higher or go on strike. But I never got—Townhouse was the only place I ever worked for regular union scale. The restaurant always got more than scale.

3-00:44:13

Washburn:

You joined—the first union you joined was when you were with the Merchant Marines?

3-00:44:20

Arnold:

No, before that when I was in high school, I would go to Kansas City and work in the Wilson Packing Company, summer time job. So I had to join the union there. That was all CIO then. Now, there was a union that was a commie union. CIO.

3-00:44:44

Washburn:

Why was that?

3-00:44:41

Arnold:

I don't know, they were communists. They would come beat the hell out of you if you didn't join. I said, "Well, I tell you, I can't join, my dad works for the FBI. No way could I join your union." I lied. And he believed me. So, I could have joined that one, CIO. I don't even know what it means now.

3-00:45:14

Washburn:

But the bartender's union, what was there—what was the difference, you know, in scale. You said at the Townhouse you made union scale and when you moved somewhere else. Was it better to be—did you find it better to be part of the union?

3-00:45:29

Arnold:

Yes, because I believed in it. And it was five dollars a month or something like that. I think it's twenty now. I get a pension from them. Not much, but it helps. And the guy that owned the Casa Orinda, he worked when I retired from working. Ivan {___}. Do you know where the Casa is?

3-00:46:02

Washburn:

No.

3-00:46:02

Arnold:

In Orinda, a real nice restaurant. He was on the board of the union because he had bought that place. So, I am sure that he's the guy who saw my name and said, "We'll pay this guy." So I get hundred- thirty dollars a month. And I got that for ten years now or more than that. So way more than I put in, I have gotten back way more. But, it was twenty, I think, dollars when I left the union a month.

3-00:46:58

Washburn:

So talk a little bit about the neighborhood you moved into was mostly white?

3-00:47:06

Arnold:

There were some Italians there.

3-00:47:05

Washburn:

Some Italians.

3-00:47:11

Arnold:

And on the end of the block was the {Miamoto} Florists. In fact, I bought a goat from the Italians on the corner across the street from the florists. I said, "What are you going to do with that little kid?" "Oh, we are going to kill it, take its stomach and make cheese." Make cheese and put it in the stomach out of the goat. I don't know why, but that's what they—"I says, "What the hell, I'll buy that goat from you." So, I bought it for five dollars, I think or ten. Put it in my back yard. Raised him up until he finally ate my wife's panties and socks on the clothesline.

3-00:47:50

Washburn:

And so what did you do with the goat?

3-00:47:58

Arnold:

My mother in law, and a friend of theirs from {Walsenberg} had worked in the shipyards. They took her in the garage and butchered her.

3-00:48:09

Washburn:

And ate her.

3-00:48:05

Arnold:

And ate her, yes. [laughs]. There went the goat.

3-00:48:11

Washburn:

That's what goats are for I guess, you know.

3-00:48:16

Arnold:

I guess so. The Miamotos, they were nice people.

3-00:48:29

Washburn:

But, for the most part, it was sort of a segregated neighborhood?

3-00:48:27

Arnold:

Yes, I would say so.

3-00:48:27

Washburn:

And in the bars you worked in, where they mostly segregated too?

3-00:48:33

Arnold:

No, well, yes. Yes, we wouldn't serve colored people. We would say "Oh, you're an Indian, we can't serve Indians." It was against the law to serve Indians at that time. "Oh, I'm an Indian." They know damn well as me.

3-00:48:59

Washburn:

Why was it segregated like that at that time?

3-00:48:58

Arnold:

I don't know, because—I don't know. I was never that prejudiced really, but if that's what the owner wants, that's what he is going to get. We don't want colored people in there. That's what we used to come up with. "Hey, we don't serve Indians in here."

3-00:49:19

Washburn:

Because you couldn't—why didn't people just put a sign out saying, "No black people allowed" or something like that?

3-00:49:31

Arnold:

Well, we should've, but that's against the law too. Those were against the law too.

3-00:49:41

Washburn:

Yes, it was a different era.

3-00:49:43

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:49:44

Washburn:

So, where did the—did you guys, if you are not supposed to serve Indians, what about Mexican folks who came in?

3-00:49:54

Arnold:

Yes, we would serve them.

3-00:50:01

Washburn:

You would serve them. But what if their skin color was dark enough that they might look Indian?

3-00:50:03

Arnold:

We would say, “Hey, yes, you’re an Indian and we can’t serve you.” And most of them couldn’t drink anyhow. They would get two or three drinks and they would want to fight or something. Them Mexicans were [inaudible] and the Indians, of course, they couldn’t hold their booze either. One of my best friends was an Indian from Arizona, and he had a brother, both in the Marines, and this guy was a hell a nice guy. I mean, he could drink me under the table and still be a nice guy, but his brother, a little fart, didn’t weigh 120 pounds. He was always getting in fights. Three or four beers and he is ready to fight somebody.

3-00:50:44

Washburn:

So down by the Townhouse, there were, it was kind of a Mexican neighborhood down there?

3-00:50:54

Arnold:

More down the street.

3-00:50:56

Washburn:

More down the street. Down by the railroad yard, huh?

3-00:50:59

Arnold:

Well, not that far. First Street. Three or four bars down that way. Yes. First, Second and Third. There is an Italian bar down there too, what the hells it’s name? They have a bar out in the damn road now, where they had it for years and years.

3-00:51:28

Washburn:

Did Italian and Portuguese folks come into Townhouse?

3-00:51:36

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:51:42

Washburn:

So it wasn't so divided where they had their own bars too?

3-00:51:49

Arnold:

Yes, yes.

3-00:51:53

Washburn:

At what time did—what it always that way mostly? Would there be white bars and black bars and it didn't really mix in Richmond or do you remember at some point things started changing a little bit?

3-00:52:05

Arnold:

North Richmond had their bars, which I wouldn't go in, no white guy would go in, and same with downtown Richmond. They knew better, they had their own bars to go to. Of course, there would be some shooting, killing out there, more than we had.

3-00:52:32

Washburn:

And what about—was that also so the same for, like you mentioned the sports bar room. Was it also the same for dances too?

3-00:52:42

Arnold:

That was closed when I was there. I remember going up there and seeing it. I can't think of the guy who owned the building. It was a Greek guy. He had the Manhattan Club, and he was a friend of Marie, the gal that ran the union. They were good friends. That's why I got fired from there because I couldn't take his dirty friend's job away from her.

3-00:53:15

Washburn:

So, but you don't remember the—oh, that's a different question, I will ask that later. What about just the—talk a little bit just about the politics in town in like 1945. I mean, you came and you were new to town, so maybe you didn't know what was going on with the politics or not, but did you feel like you were kind of separated from the town politics a little bit?

3-00:53:44

Arnold:

Well, I wouldn't miss it really.

3-00:53:46

Washburn:

Yes, why not?

3-00:53:46

Arnold:

I don't know. I guess I wasn't interested. If I offered a job as councilman, I wouldn't accept it. I didn't have time to get involved with it.

3-00:54:06

Washburn:

But you mentioned people coming into the bar you worked in were from Standard Oil. There are some big wheels from there and Santa Fe or you know, who were kind of more influential in town. Did people talk about politics in the bar? Do you remember anything?

3-00:54:24

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes.

3-00:54:23

Washburn:

What could you describe about that?

3-00:54:30

Arnold:

Well, in the council, there was always somebody from Standard Oil. A foreman or somebody. They always represented. It was the biggest working place in town, Standard Oil, so if you—so they wanted the mouthpiece on the council, so they always had one. But, now with many blacks on the council, there is more than whites I guess. I have been gone for ten or twelve years so—

3-00:55:02

Washburn:

But, you remember at that time, the Standard Oil and the City Council having a close relationship?

3-00:55:15

Arnold:

Oh yes, very close.

3-00:55:22

Washburn:

So, what do you—?

3-00:55:24

Arnold:

The Mayor. But he was a—one of them had a store out in Point Richmond, I can't think of his name.

3-00:55:43

Washburn:

And what about more national politics? You mentioned something about, you know, anti-communism sentiment. Do you remember what some of the talk was in the bar in 1945 about what was going on with the country and politics?

3-00:56:04

Arnold:

No. I know Roosevelt was still going strong.

3-00:56:14

Washburn:

So, it doesn't sound like people came in and they—they didn't—they were just—what were they mostly talking about if it was—talking about sports or their wives or their girlfriends or such?

3-00:56:25

Arnold:

Yes, yes. And a lot of them worked the Ford Plant too. That was in south Richmond. The building is still there, I think. They are going to make a museum or something out of it.

3-00:56:39

Washburn:

Yes, I think so.

3-00:56:44

Arnold:

The Ford people, three or four people every night I would see the workers that worked there.

3-00:56:57

Washburn:

Well, so how do you remember so well that there were people working there from Standard Oil and people coming in from Standard Oil and people coming in from Ford? How do you remember that so well?

3-00:57:02

Arnold:

I don't know, I just remember the work. It was like family after a while. [Inaudible] you know what they drink and anyhow. If you are sharp, you know. And remembering names. If I forgot a name, I would always listen real close. "Hey Joe or hey Pete." Talk to you, or I would know that his name Joe or Pete or something.

3-00:57:36

Washburn:

I guess that is kind of your job as a bartender to be friendly and—?

3-00:57:41

Arnold:

Yes, yes.

3-00:57:45

Washburn:

And did those guys tip pretty well? Could you tell who was working where because of how they tipped?

3-00:57:51

Arnold:

Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, Yes, the lawyers and doctors, they tip pretty good, but not like now a days. Not like now. I mean—

3-00:58:02

Washburn:

Why is that?

3-00:58:05

Arnold:

Well, more money now a days.

3-00:58:13

Washburn:

Yes, now a days when I buy—let's say I buy a beer for three dollars, I always lay down a dollar, you know.

3-00:58:13

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:58:15

Washburn:

You know. And if maybe it is three fifty, I will leave a dollar fifty. What was the tipping like, you know, right after the war? What do you remember of it, you know, in relation to drinks and stuff?

3-00:58:34

Arnold:

Well, it was pretty good. I would make ten or twelve dollars a night at that time. At the Ivy Room, I made \$100 a lot of the time. That's the last place I worked on Solano and San Pablo on the corner. The Ivy Room.

3-00:58:56

Washburn:

So, you made—

3-00:58:55

Arnold:

That's a [inaudible] place.

3-00:58:55

Washburn:

Right, so at the Townhouse you made about ten or twelve dollars a night?

3-00:58:58

Arnold:

Yes.

3-00:58:58

Washburn:

On top of what kind of wage?

3-00:59:02

Arnold:

I think it was fifty or sixty dollars a week or something like that for five days work, six days work.

3-00:59:15

Washburn:

Right, no Sundays huh?

3-00:59:23

Arnold:

Well, yes, but six days was in a week. You might have had Wednesday off or something like that.

3-00:59:35

Washburn:

Okay, this tape is about to end so we got to stop this tape and take a little bit of break.

4-00:00:10

Washburn:

Do you have that visual?

4-00:00:04

Arnold:

It's funny how I can't remember stuff like that.

4-00:00:14

Washburn:

I will just do that one more time. This is tape two.

4-00:00:24

Arnold:

Archer, George Archer. The old pro.

4-00:00:25

Washburn:

I have heard his name before.

4-00:00:33

Arnold:

Yes, he took lessons from Old Joe, the assistant pro out here from Richmond.

4-00:00:34

Washburn:

Now, I want to talk to you a bit about the nightlife at that time. And during our first interview, you mentioned that at the Silver Dollar in El Cerrito and at the Townhouse, there weren't live bands. There were jukeboxes.

4-00:01:02

Arnold:

Yes, there were jukeboxes, plus some had—the Pablo Club had a band all the time.

4-00:01:08

Washburn:

But in the late forties and in '45, when you were at the Silver Dollar, it was just jukeboxes?

4-00:01:15

Arnold:

Right, regular bar, yes.

4-00:01:18

Washburn:

Now, I talked to some musicians the other day, over at the Eagle's Club, who were involved in the musicians union, and they were a little critical of jukeboxes because they thought it took away their business. Of course, it seems reasonable. But—

4-00:01:27

Arnold:

Gabe Vargas.

4-00:01:37

Washburn:

But what do you remember about that dynamic, either getting a jukebox or getting a band in the bar?

4-00:01:44

Arnold:

Well, the band costs you some money, and we made money on jukeboxes. Gabe Vargas was the head of the union, the musician's union, and the mayor of Richmond and he had a restaurant also in town. Gabe Vargas.

4-00:02:03

Washburn:

He was also the mayor?

4-00:02:05

Arnold:

Yes, mayor.

4-00:02:11

Washburn:

During what time?

4-00:02:15

Arnold:

That time.

4-00:02:11

Washburn:

Late forties?

4-00:02:15

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:02:18

Washburn:

And head of the musician's union. So was the musician's union pretty influential?

4-00:02:26

Arnold:

Yes, they were very strong, solid. I had a teacher, he taught my kids {Pete Grafato}, trumpet player. So he is sitting on top of the piano all gassed up playing his trumpet. It was a piano bar we had at [inaudible]. In cases, who asked Pete if he paid his dues yet? Of course he hadn't. He wouldn't be Pete {Grafato}. He belonged to the union. Before his teaching, he was a principal up here at {the} junior high School and my kids were under him.

4-00:03:06

Washburn:

He was teasing because you weren't supposed to play unless you were part of the union. So not as a—I am asking this question not as Jack Arnold: the bartender, but more Jack Arnold: just the person who lived in Richmond. In '45 and '46, what do you remember about going out to dances? Did you and your wife go out to some dances or clubs or something?

4-00:03:38

Arnold:

No, because I always worked nights. They stuck me on the night shift all the time. There was one place we used to go dancing. It was up, I can't remember the name of it, on Hegenberger Road as you get off of the highway there is a big restaurant on the right. And we would walk out there on Sunday night and have dinner. As we walked in they played my wife's favorite piece in Italian, they thought she was Italian. And [inaudible] playing. They would start "Oh, here comes Irma." It was an Italian band.

4-00:04:24

Washburn:

Yes, so you were working nights so you weren't able to go out afterwards.

4-00:04:19

Arnold:

Yes, up until June when they closed the Townhouse. They had to close at twelve o'clock, and then they took that off and you could go to two.

4-00:04:40

Washburn:

Why did you have to close at twelve?

4-00:04:42

Arnold:

Because that was the law. ABC, American Beverage Control. That was their law at that time.

4-00:04:55

Washburn:

Why do you think they had it ending so early? I mean, was it that way everywhere in the state?

4-00:05:01

Arnold:

Yes. That's why I bought the bar in Colorado because it was an after hours joint, and it did good until they jealous of me, taking everybody out of town on Friday and Saturday night to come to my place. So I closed at two, which they did after they closed the Townhouse to remodel it. I stayed back there for a year and a half.

4-00:05:38

Washburn:

What music do you remember were popular to play on the jukebox at the Townhouse or at the—?

4-00:05:50

Arnold:

Well, all the Bing Crosby stuff, Sinatra, I don't know. Peggy Lee. "Put another nickel in the nickelodeon," I remember her, but I can't think of her name.

4-00:06:09

Washburn:

So was it mostly kind of swing?

4-00:06:11

Arnold:

Yes. "Put another nickel in, in the Nickelodeon." [sings] it's coming back, but I can't remember her name. Famous for that song. But everybody had it out on the jukebox.

4-00:06:24

Washburn:

So, do you remember people dancing also to the jukebox?

4-00:06:26

Arnold:

Oh yes. Silver Dollar, yes. It would be crowded on a Friday, Saturday night.

4-00:06:37

Washburn:

And did—were the people who were dancing—?

4-00:06:38

Arnold:

Not the Townhouse. They didn't dance there too much.

4-00:06:47

Washburn:

But over at the Silver Dollar in '45, when they were dancing, was it—did men bring their wives or was it—what was the kind of—?

4-00:06:54

Arnold:

Yes, man and wife.

4-00:06:57

Washburn:

What was the romantic dynamic like at that time?

4-00:07:03

Arnold:

Just like now I guess. I don't know.

4-00:07:13

Washburn:

I mean you must have noticed being at the bar. Did single men come in there to meet single women?

4-00:07:10

Arnold:

Yes, yes. Or break up the married one. There was cheating going on too. I can't say it now because I am on TV.

4-00:07:30

Washburn:

No, you don't have to. But, just—

4-00:07:34

Arnold:

No, I mean with myself.

4-00:07:36

Washburn:

Oh right, but just describing it in terms of general terms, would single women come in there with other single women just to meet single men?

4-00:07:50

Arnold:

Right. Yes. I can remember next door to the Townhouse was a beauty parlor, and she's an old gal and her old man was a big wheel at Standard Oil. And two or three of her girls would come in every night for a cocktail. And her—I can't remember any names, but just about every night they would close up at five or six or something and come next store to have their toddies.

4-00:08:30

Washburn:

And so—

4-00:08:28

Arnold:

I used to have this old gal come to the bar, young gal. Her husband was something in Alamo [inaudible] working on the atomic bomb I guess it was, New Mexico. And great boobs. I take a piece of ice and throw it. Never missed.

4-00:08:44

Washburn:

You were flirting with her. But—

4-00:08:59

Arnold:

She did give me a fifty-cent tip.

4-00:08:57

Washburn:

Because you were behind the bar and you kind of could see what was going on, what were your recollections about how people would meet. For somebody like myself, who doesn't know how men and women who are single would meet each other.

4-00:09:21

Arnold:

Oh gee, it is hard to say. I wouldn't have any idea. I know some of them, I introduced them. Get on with it, do something tonight, and they would.

4-00:09:43

Washburn:

So would you—if you were looking out on the to the floor of the bar, would you see tables of strictly men and tables of strictly women or you know—

4-00:09:56

Arnold:

Just like mixed.

4-00:09:52

Washburn:

Just like now.

4-00:09:57

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:10:01

Washburn:

Okay, I am just trying to get a sense of. Okay, so when people married, do you think people still came in even though they were married?

4-00:10:11

Arnold:

Yes, sure.

4-00:10:15

Washburn:

So, it wasn't strictly an either singles scene or married couples scene or stuff like that.

4-00:10:24

Arnold:

I would say more man and wife come together than single girls looking for something, but there are quite a few of those too. But the married couples had them outnumbered.

4-00:10:37

Washburn:

And what about at the Townhouse, was this a similar scene?

4-00:10:50

Arnold:

Yes, same thing.

4-00:10:51

Washburn:

And I think I asked you about country music at that time, and—

4-00:11:04

Arnold:

The bands.

4-00:11:02

Washburn:

The Okie culture. What do you remember?

4-00:11:04

Arnold:

Don Churchill and Ray Wade. That's the two I remember. At the Barn. You asked me about the Red Barn. It was that way from Cutting, but down towards the tracks somewhere. There was some park and I think that's where Ray Wade was playing all the time and Don Churchill would play there.

4-00:11:28

Washburn:

Dude Martin? Do you remember Dude Martin?

4-00:11:32

Arnold:

Yes. It rings a bell, but the other two I remember better.

4-00:11:33

Washburn:

Was it as East Shore Park?

4-00:11:38

Arnold:

Yes, at East shore Park. That's what it was. It was an old barn called the Red Barn. I forget now, but I went there dancing once, my wife and I.

4-00:11:50

Washburn:

Yes, can you describe what it—was it an old barn?

4-00:11:52

Arnold:

Yes. Because there was nothing there before the war. Then the housing all the way around there.

4-00:11:59

Washburn:

So, it was—

4-00:12:06

Arnold:

Now it's all black.

4-00:12:08

Washburn:

Yes, but it was a barn that predated the war?

4-00:12:10

Arnold:

I imagine so, yes. We used to dance the hay mouse.

4-00:12:17

Washburn:

Dance the what?

4-00:12:18

Arnold:

Hay mouse.

4-00:12:19

Washburn:

What's the hay mouse.

4-00:12:20

Arnold:

That's where you put the hay in the top of the barn. The floor is nice and slick from the hay and had dances at different places. Back in the twenties or thirties.

4-00:12:42

Washburn:

So you said you went to dance there at the Red Barn?

4-00:12:42

Arnold:

Yes, one time I think we did.

4-00:12:38

Washburn:

What do you remember about it?

4-00:12:44

Arnold:

I don't know, just Okie band. Everybody getting gassed and having a good time. The Pablo Club that was a four or five piece band and a bar. It's gone now. I don't know what become of it.

4-00:13:09

Washburn:

So, which—do you remember what year you went to the Red Barn?

4-00:13:19

Arnold:

Had to be '44 or '45.

4-00:13:23

Washburn:

And was it pretty crowded?

4-00:13:25

Arnold:

[Narrator excised the answer]

4-00:13:52

Washburn:

At the Red Barn, did you feel—you said it was an Okie band. Why did you say it was an Okie band?

4-00:13:53

Arnold:

Well, that's what they all were. We called them, Ray Wade. With guitars and cowboy music, and everybody wore their boots and their cowboy hats. Not me, but most people.

4-00:14:11

Washburn:

Did you feel a little bit out of place when you went there, do you remember?

4-00:14:14

Arnold:

No. I fit in every place.

4-00:14:26

Washburn:

That was the—it seems like a little bit of the—from what I remember, there was kind of a white culture in Richmond that was people who listen to swing and stuff like that, and then there is more the Okie culture.

4-00:14:45

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:14:49

Washburn:

Why do you think there was that kind of division or the difference?

4-00:14:47

Arnold:

Well, I imagine because there are so many Okies out here from the Southern part, Texans. So, they hung out together, and they spent money like anybody else. That's the only thing I can think of.

4-00:15:18

Washburn:

When you say Okie, that's just like a general term. You are meaning what?

4-00:15:22

Arnold:

Come from Oklahoma.

4-00:15:28

Washburn:

Did you also say "Texies" and "Arkies"?

4-00:15:32

Arnold:

Yes, yes. In De Moines we had the Aragon, the big bands all played. And in Oakland, Sweets Ballroom, the big bands went there. Harry James and not Glenn Miller cause he got killed crossing the channel, but at that time—

4-00:16:02

Washburn:

Gene Krupa.

4-00:16:08

Arnold:

Gene Krupa. The big bands. Whitman. I saw this guy, big band at the Aster theatre in New York. By the time we got to Chicago at the [inaudible] theatre, and there he was again. Clarinet player and I can't think of his name.

4-00:16:21

Washburn:

Benny Goodman?

4-00:16:21

Arnold:

No.

4-00:16:24

Washburn:

Artie Shaw?

4-00:16:23

Arnold:

No. Yes, those guys all played in Oakland.

4-00:16:31

Washburn:

Woody Herman?

4-00:16:30

Arnold:

Woody Herman. That's who it was. Woody Herman. How do you remember that?

4-00:16:38

Washburn:

I know jazz music. I know old time music music. Yes, he's good.

4-00:16:39

Arnold:

Woody Herman, that's who it was.

4-00:16:49

Washburn:

And his herd. Woody Herman and his herd.

4-00:16:55

Arnold:

Woody Herman. Fats Domino I saw him. Roseland Ballroom. That always had a cracked up band. New York City, ten cents a dance. Oakland had the Roseland Theatre, Roseland Ballroom. Same thing. Twenty cents, you get a little closer. Fifty cents, they will rub you off. That's when I single and in my prime. [laughs] I used to go all the time, and now I am old and gray, I only go once a day.

4-00:17:38

Washburn:

Yes. And so, what else can you tell me, is there anything else you can tell me about the Red Barn?

4-00:17:50

Arnold:

No, that's all there was.

4-00:17:47

Washburn:

Yes, didn't remember much? Is there anybody you can think of who I might be able to talk to went there pretty often?

4-00:17:55

Arnold:

I could, but they are all dead now.

4-00:18:00

Washburn:

Really?

4-00:18:04

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:18:03

Washburn:

Like Don Churchill or something like that?

4-00:18:02

Arnold:

Yes, they got divorced, and I saw her. I rented an apartment to her.

4-00:18:13

Washburn:

What was his wife's name?

4-00:18:15

Arnold:

I don't remember.

4-00:18:15

Washburn:

Yes, I have seen a picture. Blonde, right?

4-00:18:14

Arnold:

Blonde girl. She wound up running a motel in Kearnyville, Russian River. Going out of town.

4-00:18:23

Washburn:

Guernville?

4-00:18:26

Arnold:

Yes, Guernville.

4-00:18:26

Washburn:

She has probably passed away?

4-00:18:32

Arnold:

Yes, she is probably older than me, and I am eighty in May.

4-00:18:37

Washburn:

So you mentioned that your home on 50th Street, you moved out because the highway was coming through.

4-00:18:52

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:18:54

Washburn:

Well, could you tell me the story of why you had to move out of your home?

4-00:19:04

Arnold:

Well, that's when they were making I-80, and they were making an off ramp that would take all of the homes, which they did.

4-00:19:20

Washburn:

About what time was this, what year?

4-00:19:22

Arnold:

Well, it was about two or three years after we sold, and they probably got an even better price than I got.

4-00:19:30

Washburn:

Oh, so you weren't still living in the home when that happened? Now, where did you live?

4-00:19:32

Arnold:

I went to Colorado when I sold the home because Townhouse closed for remodeling.

4-00:19:38

Washburn:

Okay, I have got to follow the story a little bit better. Okay, so you weren't actually there? So, then you moved up to Colorado in '46.

4-00:19:44

Arnold:

They closed the Townhouse to remodel it. I think that's where [inaudible].

4-00:19:49

Washburn:

So you came back and started working for Mauna Club?

4-00:20:07

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:20:08

Washburn:

When you moved back, where did you move to in town?

4-00:20:12

Arnold:

I moved in with my folks.

4-00:20:16

Washburn:

Again.

4-00:20:15

Arnold:

Yes. I had bought them a house where they lived at the time.

4-00:20:27

Washburn:

Did you live in that home with your folks?

4-00:20:31

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:20:31

Washburn:

Oh, so you were taking care of them?

4-00:20:41

Arnold:

No, I wasn't taking care of them, they were taking care of me putting a roof over my head because I went broke back there.

4-00:20:33

Washburn:

Because you put all this money into the bar.

4-00:20:46

Arnold:

And fixing it up.

4-00:20:48

Washburn:

And then there was a really horrible winter.

4-00:20:50

Arnold:

And plus I had to get another license because they closed me down. So we took a bus back to Richmond. So, I stayed there for a while, and then we got an apartment on Ohio Street or somewhere in there. 13th and Ohio, I think, because I knew the guys that run war housing. Jimmy Best was the headman and Jim Kenny was another on the board, and I knew them from bartending at the Townhouse. So he fixed me up with a nice two-bedroom apartment. So we stayed there until—then I went back to Silver Dollar again.

4-00:21:48

Washburn:

From the Mauna Club huh?

4-00:21:46

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:21:49

Washburn:

Well, how did—so, these guys helped you—who were part of the war housing board helped you get an apartment. But this was in the late forties?

4-00:22:05

Arnold:

Yes, because that was in the forties.

4-00:22:09

Washburn:

How long did people on the war housing board kind of still have influence over who got a house where? I mean, now that the war was over, they still had some kind of control.

4-00:22:24

Arnold:

Yes, they did for quite a few years.

4-00:22:28

Washburn:

Can you describe that or how that worked?

4-00:22:31

Arnold:

I don't know. I knew them, so they fixed me up with an empty one. Someone had moved out or bought a house or something somewhere. That's the only way I got in.

4-00:22:36

Washburn:

Was it a nice apartment?

4-00:22:45

Arnold:

Yes. It's a war housing thing, but yes, it was pretty good.

4-00:22:56

Washburn:

What were those, their were so many of them—what was yours? What did it look like?

4-00:23:01

Arnold:

Let's see. Eight units. I think it was eight or ten units. Two bedrooms, one bedrooms, three bedrooms. I had an apartment house on Lexington. Twelve-something Lexington. And it was twelve units. Four three bedrooms, four two bedrooms, and two one bedroom.

4-00:23:41

Washburn:

So you went back to the Mauna Club in the late forties, which had a pretty big reputation, I remember.

4-00:23:48

Arnold:

Yes, nice place. [inaudible] was across the street, a funeral parlor and she rented rooms to single guys. So we had them. And people I knew from Townhouse. I knew a lot of people from [inaudible] Hotel they that fixed that up. And the customers follow you. So, I had quite a few from Townhouse come over and see me.

4-00:24:20

Washburn:

So, this is in the late forties when the shipyards had already closed down. So where were all the folks who were coming into the club working?

4-00:24:37

Arnold:

Well, I don't know. A lot of them worked for the city. Standard Oil of course. They—and the shipyards. Well, after them, come Willamette Shipyard. They took it over, and they were probably not had as many people working as Kaiser had, I imagine. I knew all the big wheels. Of course, I knew them at Louise Club. They would come out for lunch afterward. All the wheels, the big guys. And this was in the sixties that was. I was in Louise Club.

4-00:25:25

Washburn:

What was Willamette—they were still producing liberty ships, or did they produce another kind of ship?

4-00:25:29

Arnold:

Repair ships.

4-00:25:32

Washburn:

What kind of ships?

4-00:25:35

Arnold:

Repair, ships would come in and they would put it on the dry dock and clean the bottoms and stuff and do the engines over. They come from Willamette, Oregon, and they still have yards up there. I don't know what's there now.

4-00:25:53

Washburn:

So, they weren't building ships, they were repairing.

4-00:25:59

Arnold:

Repairing, like a shipyard. Like Bethlehem. They had dry docks over there too in San Francisco.

4-00:26:12

Washburn:

So it seems to me that working there, you didn't seem to notice that people were talking about being out of work or anything like this?

4-00:26:26

Arnold:

No, because I went back to Silver Dollar after Mauna. And I worked there until Louise wanted me to come down to her place.

4-00:26:41

Washburn:

Do you think part of that is because though, it sounds like the places you were working, were—I mean, didn't have the biggest blue collar crowd. More white collar crowd.

4-00:26:48

Arnold:

Yes. Well, Silver Dollar was working class. It was meant to serve the working class, but we had doctors come in too. Everybody at the Townhouse, they would come see me.

4-00:27:19

Washburn:

So, you know, everybody asks me, and this is something I was actually interested in discussing with you because you worked down there. The Mauna was on 11th Street. Everybody talks a lot about how the downtown in Richmond, and when you drive down there now, you can see it's boarded up and stuff, but how it slowly started to decline. Some stores started closing up.

4-00:27:49

Arnold:

I would say sixties, middle fifties.

4-00:27:53

Washburn:

Why do you say that?

4-00:27:59

Arnold:

That's when they started boarding them up. {Travelini's}, they had a big furniture store, and they got burned down one night. Somebody said arson. It was on 16th and Macdonald. So, a lot of other people started closing up and moving off.

4-00:28:20

Washburn:

Working at the Mauna Club in the late forties, did you sense there was much of a change from during the war down there?

4-00:28:31

Arnold:

It was about the same. In fact, we had a lot of the people from the Standard Toilet Bowls.

4-00:28:34

Washburn:

American Standard.

4-00:28:49

Arnold:

American Standard. All the big wheels from there come to the Mauna Club. All from Kentucky. The wheels, I mean the big shots, plus the other guys that worked there. In fact, they put on the record player; "My Old Kentucky Home" and they would stand up and salute. All drunk, but nice guys. And then the races. The damn machine. Dunk glass like this. Like a computer. [Inaudible] was coming and they books at the track.

4-00:29:30

Washburn:

Oh, so you could bet, and like the tape would come out.

4-00:29:28

Arnold:

Yes. In fact, all the world series one time, coming off of this thing, and I wrote it all up and saved each game.

4-00:29:30

Washburn:

Oh really.

4-00:29:41

Arnold:

I forget now where it is.

4-00:29:45

Washburn:

Where it is? Yes, do you still have it?

4-00:29:45

Arnold:

The tapes?

4-00:29:44

Washburn:

Yes.

4-00:29:45

Arnold:

I don't know, I think I probably threw them away.

4-00:29:52

Washburn:

So, you don't think things started changing down there until the mid-fifties.

4-00:30:00

Arnold:

Yes, I think so. Because McCracken's closed, and Alexander took over the Johnson's Men's Store. Something, Alexander, I know him too, but I can't think of his name, but he is retired now. They are all retired. Well, they are all dead now. Ed Breuner's left town. That was across the street from the Townhouse, and they closed the Elks Club, and below that was a Reed's Drugstore. And next to them was Bill {Strebley}, the jeweler. A friend of mine, my jeweler, he worked for Strebley, and he came out of the navy, he was a clock man and worked for the navy. He got his own business in El Cerrito Plaza. E. G. White. He worked for Strebley, but all them people are gone. They left at that time.

4-00:31:19

Washburn:

What do you remember about, you know, I look in the old newspapers and you see a lot of ads about homes for sale in El Sobrante and Pinole. What do you remember about people talking about moving out that way? And when you noticed people started to do that?

4-00:31:35

Arnold:

I guess in the forties or fifties. Get out of war housing and they build out there I guess. Not too many natives. Natives of California. They are all from somewhere else like worked in the shipyard or Standard Oil. I don't know. I remember where Dam Road and San Pablo, there was a place called L and his mother's name is Rosie [_____], and they had dancing there. We would meet there after—close up at twelve and then go other there for breakfast. Al Gianinni. Mrs. Gianinni and his mother Rose. I hear he's dead. He sold that property, and then went up by Clear Lake somewhere and opened a restaurant and that was there for all through the war. Dam Road, Rancho was there, that bar. There was a bar across—

4-00:33:11

Washburn:

The Rancho's still there.

4-00:33:12

Arnold:

Bill Lewis. Ward McCracken's wife, they got divorced and she married Pete {Ogle}, and she took over the bar, the Rancho.

4-00:33:33

Washburn:

Well, I kind of want to finish up because we have been talking for a while already, and is there anything like one of your fondest memories of Richmond when you first moved there that you would like to share?

4-00:33:53

Arnold:

When I first moved here I was sailing, so I didn't get to see Richmond.

4-00:33:56

Washburn:

Or in '45 or something like that.

4-00:33:59

Arnold:

Oh, I quit in '45.

4-00:34:01

Washburn:

Something you remember about maybe your wedding day or something in Richmond that was really—

4-00:34:05

Arnold:

We got married in Albany.

4-00:34:09

Washburn:

You got married in Albany, a community church. Why not in Richmond?

4-00:34:13

Arnold:

Well, we were Catholics at that time. My wife must have joined I don't know how many churches. When they found out I was a bartender, they wouldn't talk to her after that.

4-00:34:13

Washburn:

What was your wife's religion?

4-00:34:28

Arnold:

Well, she was everything, but now we are Catholic. We both joined Saint Marks. You know where Saint Marks is. 10th and Bissell. So we joined through there. And we had a couple of good friends, priests that were getting their doctors degree at Cal in Seismology and Geology and they were real sharp priests. They belonged to the—what's the order is it?

4-00:34:32

Washburn:

Jesuits?

4-00:35:07

Arnold:

Jesuits? Yes. They were both Jesuits and that's where the guys would come to do mass to get a place to sleep while they went to school in the day time. And the other one now, one of them just retired now. His knees went out on him. I said, "Well, you genuflect so much, no wonder your knees went out." He retired from Boston College, and the other one was the dean of St. Louis University. Bill Stoker was—John Devane was the one at Boston College, and the other one took over the dean of St. Louis College, but we still get Christmas cards from Father John. He come back and married my daughter from Boston.

That's how good of a friend he was of ours. I bought him his first sport coat and slacks. When they got their doctor's degree, we took them to San Francisco for dinner, and he looked pretty sharp. I says, "Father John, they are going to know you are a priest," and he says, "Why? I got on these slacks, I got on this nice sport coat." I say, "Yes, but shoes are black and your stockings is black."

4-00:35:07

Washburn:

Not brown. That's great. Well, I want to thank you very much for doing the interview with me.

4-00:36:34

Arnold:

Well, that's nice.

4-00:36:46

Washburn:

It's very informative and you are very nice to let me come in a fill all this stuff up in the home and thank your daughter also. I want to ask you real briefly before we end. This woman's name who lived on—I have a friend who is actually a student and he is studying a little bit of stuff on communists in the bay area at that time, and so this was Louisa Bowen? Do you remember how to spell her last name? B-O-W-E-N.

4-00:37:11

Arnold:

That sounds like it.

4-00:37:16

Washburn:

And she was on Fiftieth?

4-00:37:17

Arnold:

Fiftieth.

4-00:37:22

Washburn:

Fiftieth Street in Richmond.

4-00:37:21

Arnold:

Right across the street from where I lived.

4-00:37:20

Washburn:

And what address were you?

4-00:37:23

Arnold:

I can't remember what it was. Fifty something.

)):37:29

Washburn:

And this was like 1945?

4-00:37:30

Arnold:

Yes.

4-00:37:33

Washburn:

And who was the attorney that you worked with again?

4-00:37:33

Arnold:

Harold {Swalich}.

4-00:37:44

Washburn:

Harold {Swalich}.

4-00:37:46

Arnold:

He was an attorney in town. Good attorney.

4-00:37:57

Washburn:

He was just a private guy or was he a public attorney?

4-00:38:07

Arnold:

No, he had his own business. Tom Carlson was the headman at Richmond for fifty years.

4-00:38:14

Washburn:

And so you went to a trial. Do you remember any names from the trial, of the judge or anything?

4-00:38:19

Arnold:

No, it was a Kefauver.

4-00:38:23

Washburn:

Kefauver was for the fraud of gambling.

4-00:38:25

Arnold:

He was that too, but this was another—I think it was Kefauver, yes.

4-00:38:30

Washburn:

Or was it McCarthy?

4-00:38:35

Arnold:

It could have been McCarthy.

4-00:38:37

Washburn:

Yes, but that's kind of early. What year did you go to the trial? Do you remember?

4-00:38:40

Arnold:

No, well, I was living on Fiftieth.

4-00:38:41

Washburn:

So, between '45 and '47 probably. And the trial was in Oakland?

4-00:38:51

Arnold:

Yes, at the courthouse in Oakland.

4-00:39:00

Washburn:

Okay, great. Thanks so much Jack.

4-00:39:02

Arnold:

You're welcome.

[End of Interview]