

FROM: California State Long Beach University Digital Archives  
was conducted in the living room of her home on Mt.  
Washington. 5/5/1981. audio interview #2 of 3

After Boggs finished the fall semester at Seattle College, she and her mother drove to California to join her father who was stationed at the Port of Embarkation in San Pedro. They moved into a small apartment located above a garage. The apartment had a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom. They slept on a Murphy bed and a pullout couch located in the living room. (1 Boggs and her mother decided to get a job in the defense industry "instead of sitting around and twiddling their thumbs."

They applied and were hired at Doaks, a small plant that manufactured parts for the C-47 airplane produced by Douglas Aircraft. Boggs' mother worked in the main building and she worked in a long, narrow outside building. She worked on escape hatches and wing flaps. Boggs attended a week-long training course where she was taught how to drill and operate a rivet gun.

Her father did not object to her & her mother going to work. Boggs viewed work as "something to do" to pass the time. She did not have any friends because she was seventeen & people in her age group were still in high school. Boggs was unaware of how her mother learned that Doaks was hiring. They started working at Doaks in January 1944. The plant was located in a manufacturing section of Torrance. They drove to the plant & did not have any problem getting gas because "we were in defense work and very important to our nation." When they arrived at the plant, they went to the employment office & applied for work. The application process involved filling out forms & taking a physical examination.

When Boggs applied at Doaks, she was a little scared and thought, "What am I getting into." She was hired on the spot and asked to return to work the following Monday. Her mother went directly into the drill press operation in the main building. Boggs, however, was sent to a training course that was held in the main building of the company. While in training she was informed about company policy and taught drilling and riveting operations. There were a few men in the class, but the majority of those in training were women. After a week in training, Boggs was assigned to produce wing flaps in a small building that was separate from the main building.

Betty could not recall what her starting pay was when she first started at Doaks. She left the company earning seventy-five cents per hour, which was considered a good wage at that time. She got periodic raises while employed at the company.

She was nervous about working with machinery. Eventually, she became familiar with the machinery at Doaks and thought that her job was fun. She enjoyed socializing and talking at work, which was a problem and people probably wanted to tell her, "Shut up and go to work and get these things turned out."

Employees at Doaks checked out tools from a tool crib. They were required to wear pants or a jumpsuit which could be purchased from the company. They had to wear safety glasses and a hat with a large brim to protect their heads from the machinery. Women with long hair had to wear "snoods," which was a hair net that held their hair in the back. Boggs enjoyed wearing pants because it was a new fashion trend and distinguished her from other women.)... Boggs describes the assembly line process of producing wing flaps and her progression on the line. She eventually worked in an intermediate section of production.

Approximately 100 employees were working in the department. Some of these employees produced wing flaps and others produced the escape hatch or miscellaneous small parts. Everyone understood that the company was under contract to produce parts for Douglas Aircraft. When Boggs finished training, she was assigned to the wing flap department and introduced to her lead man, Art. He supervised approximately thirty women in the department. He placed Boggs with a woman who showed her what to do. Boggs remembers that Art occasionally stood in the corner and observed her to see if she was talking too much. When she saw him do this, she felt as if she had done something wrong even though she was working and talking at the same time. It became a little more difficult for her to talk to co-workers when she progressed down the line to a station where she worked alone. This was a natural progression based on her skills rather than an attempt by Art to isolate her from co-workers to keep her quiet.

The ages of the women Boggs worked with ranged from seventeen to fifty. The men at the plant also ranged in age and some of them were crippled and, therefore, unsuitable for military service. There were also a couple of Black and Mexican women employed at Doaks. The plant was not segregated and everyone got along well. Boggs describes her first experiences with racial, gender, and class segregation when she lived in the South and moved into a new section of production a couple of

months after she started working at Doaks. It took her a little while to learn the new operations, but most things she picked up along the way.

Even though Boggs was shy, she found it easy to talk to people at Doaks because everyone was very friendly. Looking back, her shyness started to subside when she began working in defense and she saw even more improvement when she returned to college in Seattle. However, she continued to find it difficult to initiate conversations or friendships with people. It was much easier for her to interact with people she already knew. Boggs and her mother worked the day shift at Doaks. Her mother was employed in the drill press section located in the main building. Boggs believes that her mother obtained drill press experience when she worked for Boeing in Seattle. Boggs thinks that her mother started working for Boeing as a secretary and then moved into production. She returned to Boeing when they moved back to Seattle from California. When she first started at Doaks, she worked an eight-hour shift from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A few months later, however, she was required to leave at 3:00 p.m. in accordance with California labor laws. The company informed her that she was not allowed to work without a work permit and that she could not work more than eight hours a day because she was under the age of eighteen. This was frustrating because she enjoyed her work and wanted to stay longer. This schedule was a nuisance because she had to take the bus home which took a long time.

Boggs continues to discuss the frustration she felt when she was required to leave work early because of her age. The job she completed was much more physically strenuous than anything else she had done before. She was tired the first few days after she started working at Doaks but explained that it was healthy and tired and she felt fulfilled knowing that she produced something important. She got used to the work in a short time and the fatigue subsided. She was on her feet for the duration of her shift at Doaks. (She does not recall ever hearing any negative comments made by men towards the women employed at Doaks. There were very few men employed in her department because the work was lighter than in production areas where the work was heavier and, thus, completed by men. She dated a welder while at Doaks and he never mentioned that women would only be in the defense industry for the duration of the war or that men did a better job than women. The employees at Doaks received a morning break and a half-hour lunch break in the afternoon. The plant was equipped with a cafeteria where employees could purchase food.

They usually sat outside in a patio area where tables were stationed. Boggs remembers the lunch facilities being a nice reprieve from the gray, metal interior of the plant. She always lunched with the people she worked with in her department

Boggs talks about the friends she made while at Doaks. Her co-workers raised money and bought her a going-away present when she left Doaks and returned to Seattle. They usually talked about their families and their social lives.

She describes the plant facilities. She never really observed the type of production that occurred in the main plant. She walked through the welding department and into the drill press department to meet her mother. The building where Boggs worked was very noisy. While working in the cable section of wing flap production, Boggs bucked her rivets. There was a short period when she worked with another woman, indicating that it was fun because they worked as a team and made-up signals to tell each other when to rivet and buck.

The temperature in the plant was fairly cold. There were heaters overhead, but Boggs did not think heat was necessary once she started working and moving around. The plant was coldest when she started her shift in the morning. The only windows in the plant were located very high on the plant's interior walls. The windows served as a light source and were not opened for ventilation purposes. The plant doors were usually opened when the plant got too warm to allow cool air to ventilate the plant. Boggs does not remember feeling uncomfortable with the temperature conditions. A large percentage of employees at Doaks were "Okies." They teased each other about their Oklahoma characteristics. However, Boggs remembers them as very friendly and pleasant people to work with. The fact that "everyone was a foreigner from another state" made it easier to get acquainted. Boggs never heard anyone talk about lesbians or make comments about women who appeared or acted masculine. There was a nurse stationed in the main building in case anyone was injured on the job. However, Boggs does not recall anyone injuring themselves. The company enforced safety precautions and was strict about people wearing safety goggles and hats. Employees received raises according to their time on the job. The pace of production was fast and there was "no standing around and you had so many things and pieces that you had to get out or else you would hold up that line." Her lead man watched the workers to make sure production was moving smoothly and according to schedule. It did not bother Boggs when her lead man watched her keep her from talking too much while working.

She was embarrassed when she got caught in the act. There was teasing and flirting that occurred at the plant. Whenever Boggs walked through the main building she heard "cat calls." People in the plant dated and probably had extramarital affairs; however, she does not recall ever hearing any gossip or rumors about these relationships. She dated a welder at the plant who was thirty-four years old. Her parents did not object to their age difference. Their favorite activity was sightseeing on the weekends. When people in her department gossiped it was usually about their leadman, Art.)... The company assisted employees with transportation or housing needs. There also was a company store where people could buy work attire and safety materials such as hats, safety goggles, and work jumpsuits. She recalls that the jumpsuits were very unattractive gray suits with elastic bands at the waist. She does not recall there being any counselors at the plant. Everyone seemed to be happy and satisfied with their jobs. There were no labor issues and the plant was not unionized. Her mother did all of the cooking and cleaning while they were employed at Doaks. Boggs was not responsible for any household chores, nor did she pay for room and board. She used her earnings to purchase clothing and shoes. Looking back, she is embarrassed by the way she spent her money on frivolous items.

Even though Boggs and both her parents were employed during the war, their standard of living did not change. Her parents did not make any big purchases during the war, nor did they move into a bigger place. Boggs believes that her mother was frugal and probably put most of her earnings in the bank. There was a war bond program at Doaks, but the company never pressured its employees to participate in the program. Boggs never purchased any bonds during the war. Employees at Doaks were conscious of the war because the company was constantly pushing people to produce more to aid in the war effort. People also talked about their loved ones who were fighting overseas. Boggs was even more aware of the war because her father was an army officer. In addition to gas rationing, people were affected by the war because of food rationing and other restrictions. She remembers the call for blackouts and the constant reminder to "close their windows and close their shades." Even though she knew that an attack on the California Coast was possible, she never feared they would be bombed. A typical evening during the week included eating dinner with her family, after which they would do some reading or listen to their favorite radio programs.

Betty and her mother frequently went to the movies or the library. However, Boggs lived for the weekends when she went sightseeing with the welder she was dating. He talked about marriage, but she was never too thrilled about the idea. She went to Fontana with him to meet his sister and her family. The fact that they liked her did not have any impact on how she felt about him. When she left California they corresponded for a short time, but the letters eventually trailed off and she never saw him again. Boggs and her mother quit their jobs at Doaks in 1944. Boggs never thought about turning her job at Doaks into a career. She and her parents moved to Portland, Oregon and she got a job as a file clerk. Her mother also found a clerical position at the Vancouver Barracks, an army post in Portland. Her mother pressured her to quit her office job because she was dating too many sailors. Boggs complied and went to work as a dental assistant. She was happy about leaving the file clerk position because the work was boring. She preferred using her hands and would have liked to continue working in a factory setting.

When the family returned to Seattle in 1945, Boggs resumed her courses at Seattle University. They returned to Seattle because her mother felt that she was "dating all these wild men" and hoped that college would help Boggs, "make something more of my life." Boggs continues to discuss her love life and describes the dating activities she enjoyed while living in Portland. She recalls the celebratory climate in Seattle when the war ended. At the time, she was home alone. She remembers going to the doorway and hearing the railroad whistles and various noises of celebration. It was an exciting time and she exclaimed to a neighbor, "Isn't this wonderful." When Boggs returned to Seattle, she went to work for JC Penney as an elevator operator until the spring quarter at Seattle University started. She is proud that she contributed to the war effort and enjoys the fact that she can say to people, "Hey, I was a riveter during WWII." During the war, she never thought about what would happen to her job at Doaks after the war ended. She was too immature at the time to think about her future.