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Women in the Steel Plant, Part Two Rose Grant Young, Crane Operator I grew up right here (Whitney Pier). My mother was a MacDonald from Irish Cove. Now, they came to Sydney before the plant was built. And the old house that we lived in on Henry Street was taken down from Irish Cove on a scow. It was drifted right up, and they pulled it up over Henry Street hill with horses, and they put it where it's today still, on an angle from the Royal Bank. Then they built the front on it and they built a back on it and a side on it; and in the end, it's an enormous house. But that's the way it started • Now, my Grandfather Grant, his name was Jim. And when I was on the plant, the older men told me that he was the best rigger they had. Of course, he was dead and gone years before I was born. A rigger is the man that does the knots and holds the swings and everything, gets everything ready for the lifts. All the knots and everything to hold all that heavy equipment. Of course, they're a climber, too, they have to climb. And of course, the Newfoundlanders were fishermen and they were good riggers, so there was an influx of Newfoundlanders after the plant was built. He came from St. John's. They rented or bought a house on the top of Henry Street, and my mother lived at the bottom of Henry Street. This is how they got together. I was only born in '21. And we lived on the street where the gate to the steel plant was. It was a main street for everything there at the Pier. Because the bank was on the corner, all the shops were along, and the gate to the plant was right at the foot of the hill. In fact, when we were kids, I had a bobsled. And we used to take the men down over the hill on the bobsled to work in the wintertime--those that were brave enough to come with us! (Did you ever really have a desire to work on the plant?) No. This was 1942, that I went on the plant. At that time, my mother was in financial difficulties. And I asked for a raise at the place where I was working, and I didn't get too much satisfaction. So when I heard that they were taking names on the plant--there were two of us, another girl whose father was dead, too, came with me. In fact, there were four of us out of this store. We went over and put our names in. But we didn't have a clue as to what we were going to do or anything. We really didn't think it out. As I say, we were only kids, really. Two of us were called, and the other two weren't. And I often thought afterwards, it was because we were the children of widows that we got the jobs ahead of the others. At least, that's the way it appeared. Or any women whose husband had worked on the plant and for some reason, through sickness or something like that, weren't working, they got the jobs, too. Of course, towards the end, they were taking all the applications. Everybody was crying for steel, of course, during the war. Everything was swinging. We were working double shifts, triple shifts, everything to get the steel out. It was totally different. The rail mill was on two shifts practically all during the war. And then they rolled tie plate and the different type rails--the different poundage, you (15)