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made a lot of friends, and I enjoyed it. But I remember being so scared. I was working on gear-cutting machine. It was a huge machine, about twice the size of a tractor, say, and it was all mechanically set up to cut pinions and gears. You know what gears are, any kind of a gear. Like there's little gears in a watch, there are big gears on machines. This is a gear about two feet in diameter. And some of them a little smaller. And this pinion went on--it was all steel. You set up your machine for your cutter to cut through it. And it turned around, and would cut a tooth. Then it would turn around and cut another tooth. Into a gear. (Does it take any strength?) No, no strength on my part. There was no manual labour to it. And for the men there'd be none, because these chain falls were set up overhead for you to lift the gears and put them in place. Once I had it set up, I just had to watch that the gears were cut. I was measuring the tooth, to make sure it was right. A caliper, in a sense, but not adjustable. I was like the machinist's helper. There were two machines, two gear-cutters --he worked on one, and I worked on the other. It was only probably three feet between each machine. We dressed, of course, in jeans and sweater, like the rest of the men. We had to have our hair covered over for fear of catching our hair in machines. But at no time did we ever wear gloves. And one thing I did mind: I recall when I'd go to a dance--we'd go to dances as many nights as we could--I'd look at my hands and my fingernails, because we couldn't wear gloves, you know--my fingernails became full of grease that I couldn't get out. And I'd always sit with my hands like this (in fists)--because I could never get my hands clean. And working with machinery, splinters of metal would cut your fingers--chips from pinions. Not cut them deep, but scratch them, and the grease would get into this. And, look, they weren't sore, but they didn't look the nicest. No matter how much cream or what have you, they were there. And I was always aware of my hands when I went to a dance. (Do you think this job changed your view of what women can do?) Oh, yes. They can certainly fill in when there's no men. But to me, it's a man's job. As I said, I wouldn't want to spend my life there, that's for sure. There were some ladies who were sweepers, they were older women, say, in their 50s. I remember this poor woman, she was a sweeper. There was a bench behind my machine, if anybody wanted to hide for a little nap. And they did. They'd come in there, and I'd watch. And this poor woman, she worked hard at home and she worked hard there. She worked there because she needed the money. And every now and then, she'd crawl in back and she'd fall asleep, and her head would go back and her mouth would open, she'd be snoring. And the men down there would say, "Is she asleep?" I'd say, "Yes." And they'd tap the pipes overhead, and all the rust would come down in her mouth! She was probably a mother bringing up a bunch of children alone. This much I knew. She had a responsibility. Where I was a young unmarried girl, she was a mother with a bunch of children. She probably had to get up God knows when. Well, I left home at 6:10; we had to punch a clock in at 7 o'clock. Well now, see, my mother got me up, packed my lunch, and away I went. But this woman probably had to pack lunches



for 4 or 5 kids, do a wash and hang it out. She worked hard at home before she even left, and went home and worked again. She was tired. Double work, yeah. There were several. There were a lot of ladies over there who were widowed and were just too glad to jump at the opportunity. 'Cause the money--when I say 59¢ an hour, that doesn't sound like much, but it was good wages then. And this is why a lot of them worked there. (You went on to work in the general office. Do you remember your last day in the machine shop?) Yes. I had received my pay that day. And in it was a little pink slip saying, you know, your job was terminated. Oh, it was very emotional. And I remember this man coming over--the fellow that used to come over every morning to greet me. He said, "It's a damn shame they're letting Lobster Kettle Wliorftid* tsKlovront Steamed Ckuns, Boiled Lobsters, Chowdet t Seafood at Its Best Hav?nsld? Road • Louisbourg. Nova Scotia * Pliona 733-2877 Look for us enroute to the Lighthouse' LOUISBOURG (ii: