

Ironworkers Documentation Project

AUDIO LOG FORM

Interviewer's recording no(s): BH IW 2 [Ryan]

Contact: John Ryan (Interview #2)

Interviewer: Bucky Halker

Interview:

Date: July 27, 2011

Place: Union Headquarters, Local #63, 2525 W. Lexington, Broadview, IL 60155

Other people present: None

Background noise:

Equipment used: The Local IWU 63 headquarters can be a bit noisy and this can be heard in the background. It's an industrial building for the most part, so the cooling and heating system is a regular problem. Occasionally, the building even generates a line noise that is impossible to keep off the recording. Sometimes you can also hear people in the office section talking and laughing or somebody will walk into the room.

Equipment used: Marantz PMD 661 digital recorder and Shure SM57 microphone

Recording medium used: Transcend 8 gigabyte SD memory card, uncompressed WAV format.

Recording engineer: Bucky Halker

Summary description of audio interview contents:

Ryan talks about his hobby, fixing up antique boat motors. Many of the skills needed to this work is a spin off from his ironworker career.

Audio Interview Contents

Counter

No./Time

Topic

00:01 No introductory remarks.

[John, why don't you tell me a little bit about how you took your ironworking skills and put them to use in the hobbies that you've got.] Of course, knowing how to work with metals and drill and tap and actually tap things and bend things... I started when I retired, I had an old outboard motor in the garage. I was inspired by one that I had seen at a flea market that was a little bit out of my range. I decided I would work on it. So I did. I got rings for it and decals for it. I started with one and I have been retired now seven years or so and I started with one outboard motor and I have 37 now in the garage. [Wow.] I have a core of antiques, the oldest being 1913 and now I have a '13 and I have a '14 and '15 Evenrud row boat motors. And I have a few others that are part of my collection. The other motors that I have in the late '30s and '40s I fix up and some are in the '50s. I'll get and repair 'em and get 'em to the point where they can run. I generally don't start them, the older ones, but they have compression and spark. And I'll turn them over and it supplies me with some funds for my collection. But it's fascinating. My wife was still working when I retired, so I would go out and my ritual was... I'd go to the coffee shop in the morning and meet my friend, chat a little bit and get home and start working in the garage. And all of a sudden it's 3:30 in the afternoon and the day just went by fast. You know, I listen to some of the old timers that retired and they talked about they didn't have any time to do anything. Well, wait, you're retired. You got all day. And I'm trying to figure out now...and they would tell me and I know... Where would I fit work into this schedule? My days are filled. Busier than heck. Scheduled doing this or that or working on the motors. I got some competitive fishing that I do. It's almost like my fishin' now is suffering because I'm not getting out enough. You know...and I'm retired.

2:32 [Did you ever make your own musky lures? Have you transferred into making spoons and stuff?] Oh, not spoons. I've made some wooden bait stuff that I've tried and I've caught fish on them. I did, however, start...oh...it has to be 12 years ago. I had a friend of mine that I fish with and I called him my net man. But he was like one of the gurus in musky fishing. He was president of Muskies, Inc. and president of our club. He went to Canada all the time. I kind of would like to get into fishing with him. And I said to him one day, I said, "You know, if you ever need somebody, I'll fish with you." Well, we've been fishing together now probably 15 years. And he and his partner produce the Chicagoland Musky Show. He asked me to get involved in it. Well, I started making some leaders because that's one of the essential parts in musky fishing. You have a good leader so the fish can't bite off the line. At that time he said, "Well, sell your leaders." And I said, "Well, I can't afford a booth. But what I'll do is I'll sell what leaders I have and some odds and ends that I want to sell and get rid of and I'll split my profits with you." Well I did. That was over 11-12 years ago. And I've been in his show ever since and bought the booth. Went on to making different leaders, again, working with metals and knowing how to put things together. And so, yeah, it did help me out, working in the trade helped me out dealing with that.

4:18 [Now the boat motors, what kind of work do you have to do, just strip them down and then you have to get all the old finish off. What kind of... What's the process when you get one of those old motors?] Well, one of the first ones that I had... I had gotten involved and saw what the antique outboard motor club was like. You can go into their archives and get...and download information. And one of them was how to take an aluminum tank and fix it. And of course, I knew how to cut it apart in a certain spot, go in and pound things out. Get things prepped up and then go back and weld, aluminum weld this all together. I did try to get a Lincoln welder with a wire feed for aluminum, with the gases and

everything that you needed for it. And it just didn't work right. So I had a guy weld it up for me and then I cleaned it all up. You can buy decals and you can get paints that are close to what they were original. A lot of guys try to get the original. Sometimes I go overboard and get some wild colors, wilder colors, brighter colors that guys want to use for display. So sometimes I would go that way. You know, just cleaning the stuff up. Straightening it. I have had occasion where I gave up the idea with that aluminum because to do it right, you would have to go to the industrial quality welder and just a little bit overboard and the wire feed up in the handle and stuff. I could do it. I could weld it, but I thought ok, there's a local guy that does it professionally. I'll let him do that. So I haven't traveled that road as far as getting' my own welder.

6:16 But it's exciting to go and get something that's ready to go in the trash, clean it up and then have somebody say, "Wow, I want that." You know? [So you sell some of them?] Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I've taken some where I just kind of cleaned them up a little bit and sold them. And others where I've put too much time in and sold them. But it affords me to go on to the next one. [So what's the market like on those these days? What are they going for?] It all depends. You can buy just a relatively...I would say find...anywheres from... My cheapest one was a \$10 motor that I traveled to...Iowa, or Ohio...or Iowa to get. And I made a round trip going up toward Madison because I had to drop some motors off. But I figured it was a \$10 motor but... Generally, a motor will go from anywheres from \$70 to \$100. And if you fix them up, you can get, depending on what brand it is and who wants it. I had a guy call me one time... I had some motors that I was selling at my musky show, and I would have sold them at a profit for \$175 a piece. And I think that's what it was. And I didn't sell them. Nobody wanted them. So I found out how to post my stuff on Ebay. And I put them on Ebay and one particular motor was a Johnson '28, or '39, whatever it was. But Mr. Johnson wanted that motor. It was one that he was focused on, and he bought that motor for \$400 on Ebay. I would have sold it for \$175. So yeah, there's some marketers... You gotta find someone who wants it, that particular one was... He was Johnson. He wanted a Johnson. That particular year was a '38 or '39, whatever it was, was his birthday or something and that's what he wanted. I just had an Elgin. It was in pretty good shape. It was camouflaged in color. I sold it for \$10. I put it on Ebay and nobody was bidding on it. It was in the wrong category. I probably had \$30 in it. But for good ones, I had to get rid of it. I had it too long, so I said, "Yeah, go ahead and take it." But it's fun.

8:57 One of the interesting things now... I just had one that I looked at... A guy called me up, talked to me at one of the shows two years ago. And it was a Chris Craft outboard motor. I had seen them and you don't see them around. Chris Craft was the boat manufacturer. He puts the motors on. Right? And I kind of let go. So I was at my daughter's house, painting, and I got a call one evening. "I just came across that motor and your card, and are you still interested?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, I'm out in Aurora." "Well, strangely enough, my son just moved out to Oswego, and I go out there all the time." And I say, "I'll come by and look at it." And I got this Chris Craft Commander from him. It probably would be, when I fix it up, might be a \$350 motor that I'll have \$150 in it and my time and I got to get decals but... It's just fun dealing with them.

[Well, thanks again. It's fun to talk to you about your work and everything. That's great.]

END 10:04