

**BRICK WORKERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
LEWISTON-AUBURN, MAINE**

Richard Vallee

(Interviewer: Andrea L'Hommedieu)

September 25, 2007

Andrea L'Hommedieu: This is an interview for the Brick Makers Oral History Project. The date is September 25th, 2007, and I am speaking today with Richard Vallee, at his home in Lewiston, Maine, and this is Andrea L'Hommedieu. Could you start just by giving me your date of birth?

Richard Vallee: March 25th, 19-, excuse me, March 25th, 1935.

AL: And where were you born?

RV: Lewiston, Maine.

AL: And did you grow up here?

RV: Yes, all my life.

AL: And did you, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

RV: I had two sisters and fi-, four brothers. We were seven. My mother lost two children. We had nine children, but she lost two, we lost two.

AL: So, you grew up in Lewiston, and what did your parents do for work? Your mother was probably a homemaker.

RV: Yeah, my mother was a homemaker, and my father worked for the gas company, and during the war he, he worked for the Bath Iron Works at night. He had two jobs, seven children, he had too.

AL: Oh yeah, and so, when did you get involved with brick making? At what age?

RV: Oh, at sixteen, just before going into the Navy.

AL: And which brickyard did you work in?

RV: Morin's Brickyard, at the foothill of Bartlett Street, right down below there.

AL: And what did you do as a brick maker? Did you start in one thing, and do other things?

RV: Well, I started with the tossing, boy, oh boy, excuse me, tossing scoldings, that, that's what they, they put the, the bricks in, in, in the middle, and the put scolding all around it, so that when they heat up, they would, the heat would stay within the, the oven, that's it.

AL: Okay, and then how long did you do that?

RV: About summer vacation, and went, and I went back to school. And in the summertime when they got real hot, there was a huge water tank, just about fifty feet from the, the oven, and we would climb up the, the tank and dive in, and cool ourselves off.

AL: Oh wow, and so, did you work there just the one summer, or did you come -?

RV: Just one summer, yeah, yeah. The summer after that, I worked for public works, just for the summertime, engineering department.

AL: And what was it like working, making bricks? I mean how long were your days?

RV: They weren't long, but it was hard eight hours, yeah, four in the morning, I mean five in the morning, four in the morning and four in the afternoon.

AL: Right, was there so much that you had to get done every day, or?

RV: Yes, oh yeah, we had, we had to really move. I would stand on the bottom. There was a pile of old bricks, and one person would stand up on, near the oven, and I would toss scoldings and they would pile them up. I had to keep up with them all the time, real fast. It was an experience.

AL: Was that where you did four bricks at a time, or how -?

RV: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you have to and toss them, yeah. I don't think they'll see this.

AL: Yeah, do you have any recollections of, of stories or things that happened, during that summer you worked there that stuck out in your memory?

RV: No, the only thing is the, the refreshing part of our job, yeah, yeah, that's about it.

AL: Now, do you remember anybody that you worked with? Did you have like a team of people?

RV: Yes, my friend, Johnny Moynihan, he passed away a few years ago. He was, he was with us, and we, that's how we got the job, both of us. We went down and applied for the job, and they, they hired us. They could always use young kids running, you

know, doing nothing, and doing jobs like that.

AL: Did you get a chance to watch the strikers doing their job?

RV: That I don't remember, yeah. There was a strike at Morin's Brickyard, I really didn't know about it. And that summer of 1950, '51 I think, '51, and I went to school, no, no I went back to school in the fall.

AL: And so, you were in the Navy, did you say?

RV: Yeah, after I graduated from high school, I went to the Navy. Before that, I was in the National Guard for one year, and then I joined the Navy for four years and three months, and then when I came out, I joined the Naval Air Reserves for a year and a half.

AL: Were you in the Korean War?

RV: The Korean War, yeah.

AL: Now, is there any, go ahead.

RV: I was, I was aboard ship. My first one was an aircraft carrier, the USS Lake Champlain, and then my next was a station in Newfoundland, (*name*), Newfoundland, and then I went aboard the USS, oh boy, Joseph P Kennedy, Junior, 850, it was a destroyer, and then I came out after four years and three months. I came back from the Mediterranean, and I had three months in my enlistment to give to finish, and I found out that the, the ship was going back to Bethlehem, Israel, and all those places, so I extended three months. That's why it's four years and three months. Then I came out at Rhode Island. That was it.

AL: Great, thank you so much for your time.

RV: You're welcome.

End of Interview
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