

Hoosier Vagabond

By Ernie Pyle

PORLAND, Ore., Jan. 22.—The Willamette Iron & Steel Corp. is 75 years old, and it had never built a ship in its life. But it's building them now, all right. Two years ago it had 60 men working for it. Today the number is crowding 4000. That's the way things go when you have a war. You do what you gotta do.

Most of the shipyard workers at Willamette had never built a ship before either. They are green hands who are learning the business, under a cadre of experienced shipbuilders.

They learn pretty fast. Suppose you start as a helper. If you've got pretty good sense and try hard, you can be a welder or riveter in four or five months. And your pay jumps from 87 cents an hour to \$1.12. All winter I've been hearing yarns about fantastic wages that ex-gas-pumpers were making in the shipyards. Stories about boys who'd never made \$20 a week in their lives, now drawing down all the way from \$80 to \$150 a week. I asked about it out at Willamette. They said nonsense. They said their scale was as high as any, but that the most even a highly skilled and long-experienced artisan could make, even with overtime, would be about \$12 a week.

From the Bottom Up

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During blackouts, work stops completely and all lights go off. The men don't leave, but sit right where they were. That's partly because it would be dangerous to clamber around in the dark, and partly

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Inside Indianapolis By Lowell Nussbaum

IF YOU'VE BEEN WORRYING about where to place the new Federal auto use stamp, stop worrying right now. Some people have been confused over the apparent conflict in regulations. One of Inside's friends called and asked: "Where'll I put my stamp?"

On the back of the mirror looks like the best spot, but the papers says the Internal Revenue collector says you have to put them on the windshield."

So called the collector's office and asked R. A. Gurd, who is the official use stamp information dispenser.

"The collector's office," he says, "never has told anyone where to put the stamp. They can put it on the front fender if they want to, but it would be safer inside the car—on the windshield, or on the back of the rear view mirror." So that's that.

By the way, he pointed out that apparently no means has been provided for getting replacements for old stamps.

As to the location of stamps, Attorney Louis B. Ebbank has an idea. He suggests wetting the gummed back of the stamp and affixing it to the center of a piece of strong paper which is a half inch larger, all around, than the stamp.

"Then," he suggests, "gum that half-inch strip clear around the stamp on the face side and paste it on the windshield from the inside, so the stamp shows through. Thus attached, it is safe from the action of rain or of thieves or mischief makers."

Once a Hoosier—

"WHO," wonders George Wellsbaum, New York Bell Telephone information director, "was the pal that gave me a subscription to The Indianapolis

so no time will be lost when the lights go on. The sight of a huge ship being built wasn't as thrilling as I had thought it would be. It's just sort of like building a house—using steel plates instead of board siding.

They start at the bottom and just keep riveting or welding on plates, building up a story at a time, until they get to the top. They put in cross-plates as they go along, making the thing into rooms, you might say. The ship is really just an unspeakable number of cells, riveted together, if you look at it in the simplest way.

Months Ahead of Schedule

THE REALLY INTERESTING part comes after the ship is launched, when the ship-fitters start putting in all the gadgets. It takes just as long to finish a ship inside, after it's in the water, as it does to build it from nothing up to launching time.

The ships here now are running several months ahead of schedule, and I remarked that the Navy must be pleased.

"Not especially," was the answer. "Our schedule was set pretty loose to begin with, because we were inexperienced. And anyhow the Navy isn't satisfied nowadays with your speed no matter how fast you go. And that's the way it should be."

This rather staid old ironworks, which for three-quarters of a century has turned out heavy castings in a dark, dark, dirt-floored, hangar-like shed, has now mushroomed and spread all in a year until it seems like a beehive. To the oldsters, it seems incredible that it could have happened at all.

I asked the president what would happen if they got word from the Navy tonight, exactly doubling their contract. Could they get the men, could they handle the confusion of building more shipways, could they expand rapidly enough to make a go of it?

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