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Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Post-war America

A Dissertation Presented

by

Stephen Raymond Patnode

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

Stony Brook University

May 2008

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The Graduate School

Stephen Raymond Patnode

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the

Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend

acceptance of this dissertation.

Christopher Sellers – Dissertation Advisor
Associate Professor, Department of History

Nancy Tomes – Chairperson of Defense
Professor and Chairperson, Department of History

Herman Lebovics
State University of New York Distinguished Professor

Michael Kimmel
Professor, Department of Sociology, Stony Brook University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

Labor's Love Lost: The Influence of Gender, Race, and Class on the Workplace in Post-war America

by

Stephen Raymond Patnode

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

Stony Brook University

2008

This project reexamines questions of labor history in the United States. It traces the story of people who worked for three large defense manufacturers in Long Island from the 1930s to the 1970s. Race, class, and gender had a profound impact on identity formation and decision making for the workers of Grumman Corporation, Republic Aviation, and Sperry Gyroscope. This project contributes to the history of labor relations by reexamining the question of declining unionization rates in the U.S. following World War II. In addition to generally recognized factors such as deindustrialization and anti-union campaigns, this study assesses the role that gender, class, and race played in the decision of some workers to reject unions. In particular, femininity and masculinity were mutually constitutive categories that influenced the way men and women thought about themselves, the workplace, and organized labor. One significant contribution relates to the impact of masculinities on male workers' identities, which in turn shaped preconceptions regarding unions. Many men at Grumman resisted union campaigns because they perceived that membership would impinge upon their ability to define the workplace as a rough, masculine space. In practice, this meant that workers at Grumman feared that joining a union would reduce their autonomy within the workplace, while simultaneously weakening their job security. In other words, joining a union was actually perceived as emasculating. Union organizers had to combat these gender anxieties as they fought to recruit workers at other locations such as Republic. Defending the workplace as a manly domain reinforced existing ideas about the male worker's identity and place in a changing social order. Some men and women embraced the emerging social order of the 1960s and 1970s, while others responded equivocally.

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Acknowledgements

I have incurred many debts. Here, I would like to thank the people who have provided me with professional and personal help along the way.

Many thanks are due to my committee members: Michael Kimmel, Herman Lebovics, Christopher Sellers, and Nancy Tomes. Their patience and generosity with advice and assistance at various points over the years has been a great aid. In particular, I would like to provide special acknowledgement to my adviser, Christopher Sellers. Chris has provided me with guidance throughout the process, from framing my research questions to completing the research and producing the written word. Thank you.

Concerning the prose that follows, Chris once observed that the drafts of chapters I was giving him were already fairly polished. For this, I have the dissertation reading group that I was part of to thank. While the lineup of the “D Group” changed over the years, the quality of its feedback remained consistent. At one point or another, that roster included Ann Becker, Amanda Bruce, Bridget Chesterton, Dianne Creagh, Yvie Fabella, Catherine Flamenbaum, Ed O'Connell, Susanna Taipale, and Katrina Thompson. I have subjected Dianne and Yvie to more of my writing than anyone else, and I am very grateful for their generous efforts and keen insights over the years.

Farther afield, I also wish to thank Rosemary Elliot for her transatlantic assistance over the years with helpful comments, tips, and ideas. For some key help in the final assembly and presentation of the dissertation, I am also grateful to Susan Grumet and Domenica Tafuro.

I have also benefited from the assistance of a number of archivists and volunteers. In particular, I would like to thank Joshua Stoff and Glenn Appel at the Cradle of Aviation Museum. I also received enthusiastic assistance from Lawrence Feliu and the entire staff at the Northrup Grumman History Center. In particular, I benefited tremendously from conversations with Lynn McDonald, Robert Tallman, Mike F. Hlinko and Tom Griffin. I have also received help from the staffs of the Hagley Museum and Library; the Wisconsin Historical Society; the Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries; and the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, M.P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University. Of course, I am also very grateful to all the people who took the time to share their oral histories with me.

On a personal note, I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous encouragement, love, and support that I have received from my family over the years. My parents, Raymond and Patricia Patnode, and my sister and brother-in-law, Sheila and Michael Koumas, have always been sure of my decision to pursue a PhD, even at times when I was not. As rewarding as completing this dissertation has been, meeting my spouse, Melixa, has been the best part of the journey. Te amo.

Introduction

“Our court shall be a little academe.”
William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labor’s Lost* (1.1.13)

Shakespeare opens *Love’s Labor’s Lost* with a pact. Four young men, including King Ferdinand of Navarre, pledge to spend three years in seclusion, studying away from the world in a “little academe.” The isolation includes women, whom they vow to avoid. Unsure of the wisdom of this undertaking, one of the King’s companions laments, “O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep,/ Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep.” (1.1.48-49) What follows is one of Shakespeare’s seemingly straightforward comedies. The men immediately face a situation that threatens their pledge. A group of four young women, including the Princess of France, arrives on an embassy. The king first tries to keep his pledge by forcing the women to stay in a field outside the court. Of course, this will not do. Compelled to interact with the women, each of the men eventually falls in love and abandons his pact.

The opening of *Love’s Labor’s Lost* provides intriguing and unexpected comparisons to the subject of this dissertation: twentieth century United States labor history. In particular, the presence of gendered tensions between the sexes plays an important role in both cases. King Ferdinand’s attempt to swear off women fits, in some sense, with developments in the U.S. workplace during and after World War II. Faced with the dramatic entrance of large numbers of women and other minorities during the

war, male workers and employers set about to re-create the workplace of large manufacturers as a masculine domain following the war. They deployed a variety of practices to achieve this end, such as banning women from certain work areas, or harassing them in others. In a sense, women were banished from the court. By separating men and women in this way, male employers and workers reaffirmed the sanctity of the workplace as a male "academe", where men could pursue the serious business of engineering and manufacturing.

Scholars interested in workplaces like these tend to approach research questions from the perspective of business or labor. One of the more daunting tasks in writing a history of the U.S. twentieth century that addresses both business and labor scholars is reconciling the often contradictory lenses that these two groups use to view and analyze the past. Business historians point to the progress of people in the U.S. over the twentieth century, focusing on the increasing affluence of U.S. society as a whole. For example, per capita income reached unprecedented levels by the end of the century. Examining statistics such as car and home ownership paints a picture of an affluent, consumer-oriented society.[1] On the other hand, labor historians and many other academics examine a different set of variables and arrive at very different conclusions about the state of the U.S. By looking at factors such as income and wealth distribution, they argue that the U.S. is far less equitable than some would suggest. In other words, economic trends over the last third of the twentieth century reversed much of the progress made in the thirty

[1] In 1992 over 85 percent of American households owned at least one vehicle. Ana Aizcorbe, "Vehicle Ownership, Purchases, and Leasing: Consumer Survey Data," *Monthly Labor Review* 120 (June 1997): 34-40. A good overview of these arguments and the long-term business trends of the twentieth century can be found in Thomas K. McCraw, *American Business, 1920-2000: How It Worked* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2000).

years following World War II.[2] The tension between business and labor scholars is also apparent as they drill down into case studies of individual companies.

The tension between these competing visions of U.S. history is not easily resolved. Critics of the logic of capital have a difficult time incorporating the benefits of consumerism for the majority of Americans into their critique.[3] Proponents of the logic of capital are reluctant to even acknowledge its darker features such as sexism, racism, or imperialism.[4] While I recognize the general affluence of American citizens, particularly when measured globally, my study is more strongly informed by the work of labor historians who continue to examine the durable disparities of U.S. economic life. My primary purpose here is to examine the impact that the dramatic changes of the twentieth century have had on the identities of men and women who found themselves in the rapidly altering workplace. Among other things, this helps elucidate the cultural and economic underpinnings of the conservative resurgence in U.S. politics since the 1980s.

Business historians tend to focus on technology, management, and the underlying economics of the corporation under examination. Within this focus on corporations, however, divisions still exist among business historians about which companies matter

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[2] This literature also often addresses larger social issues such as welfare reform, education initiatives, etc. For contemporary analyses, see Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1990), Paul Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). For an unreserved critique of welfare reform, see Herbert J. Gans, *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[3] Indeed, my use of the phrase "logic of capital" comes from William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991). In this fascinating work, Cronon is also trying to arrive at a new language to talk about the large social and economic forces that have influenced both the people and the environment of North America. The formulation "logic of capital", though perhaps awkward, does have the decided advantage of attempting to get beyond the label "capitalism", which carries a voluminous amount of cultural baggage.

[4] However, some business historians have begun to incorporate these subjects systematically. See Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship* (New York: Twayne, 1998); and Robert Mark Silverman, "The Effects of Racism and Racial Discrimination on Minority Business Development: The Case of Black Manufacturers in Chicago's Ethnic Beauty Aids Industry," *Journal of Social History* 31, No. 3 (Spring, 1998): 571-597.

most and why. As a starting point for reviewing the relevant literature, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of Alfred Chandler's work for scholars interested in business. Briefly, Chandler's thesis, presented most magisterially in *Scale and Scope*, is that nations grow by fostering large, hierarchical, industrial businesses.[5] In turn, these corporations expand by exploiting economies of scale and scope. The more products that one company produces, and the greater the volume of those items, the more profitable the company will be and the more it will grow. However, a subsequent generation of scholars has carefully qualified Chandler's generalizations about this Second Industrial Revolution. Where Chandler focuses on the importance of large corporations, other scholars like Philip Scranton and John N. Ingham emphasize the important – and different – role that smaller businesses played. These small and mid-sized companies accounted for a sizeable portion of the economy and did not rely on assembly line, mass-production methods.[6]

In contrast to business historians, labor historians tend to emphasize the experience of employees, particularly unionized workers. Within this focus on workers and unions, fierce debates have emerged among labor historians about divisions among workers associated with race, gender, and class. When discussing labor history over the past twenty years, it would be difficult to overstate the importance of "new labor

[5] For a definitive introduction to his work, see Alfred D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990)

[6] For example, John N. Ingham documents the success of independent iron and steel firms in *Making Iron and Steel: Independent Mills in Pittsburgh, 1820-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991). Philip Scranton also examines the success of smaller companies that did not adopt assembly line production. See Philip Scranton, *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Philip Scranton, *Endless Novelty: Specialty Production and American Industrialization, 1865- 1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

historians" like David Montgomery, Herbert Gutman, and Sean Wilentz.[7] In general, these scholars tend to focus on historical forces that have interfered with the formation of a unified working class. While generally sympathetic to minority workers such as blacks and women, these historians tend to treat issues of race or gender as, on some level, hindrances to class identity formation. However, a subsequent generation of scholars has asked hard questions of labor history, resulting in controversy and rifts.[8] In particular, the issues of race and gender have been contentious, yet fruitful sources of scholarship.[9] Researchers such as Dennis Dickerson and Henry McKiven have shown that workers often defined themselves in terms of cultural, racial, gender, or other terms. In the process, these people often downplayed or ignored questions of class.[10]

As the debate between labor and business historians suggests, the field of history has undergone its own internal divisions over the past twenty years. Social historians

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[7] For representative and important examples, see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). I do not intend the use of quotation marks around the "new labor historians" ironically. New labor historians like Montgomery and Gutman produced (and, in the case of Montgomery, continue to produce) sophisticated scholarship that represented a significant advance for labor history, moving beyond institutional style histories of unions that previous generations of labor historians such as Selig Perlman and Philip Taft produced.
[8] For just one small example of this, see Ruth Needleman's review of Judith Stein, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) in *Journal of American History* 86, No. 2 (Sep., 1999): 865-866. Needleman praises Stein's analysis of liberalism and its impact on the struggle against workplace discrimination. However, Needleman also questions Stein's privileging of class over race in fairly pointed terms, asserting, "Stein's characterization of civil rights groups and Title VII activism is narrow and oversimplified."
[9] For an overview of the issue of race and labor history in the U.S., see Herbert Hill, "The Problem of Race in American Labor History," *Reviews in American History* 24, No. 2. (Jun., 1996): 189-208.
[10] For example, see Dennis C. Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible: Black Steelworkers in Western Pennsylvania, 1875-1980* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). Dickerson demonstrates that black steelworkers suffered from racism on the part of both employers and unions. Henry McKiven analyzes the history of Birmingham and concludes that the city did not emerge as a major iron and steel center because of mutual racial animosity and class distrust, which prevented the formation of a cohesive, segmented labor force. Henry M. McKiven Jr., *Iron and Steel: Class, Race, and Community in Birmingham, Alabama, 1875- 1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995). John Bodnar has observed that immigrants were culturally conservative and ethnically (rather than class)

greatly expanded the variety of sources that scholars could use to assess and understand changes over time. Moreover, social historians also changed the goals of historical scholarship, viewing it explicitly as an intellectual basis for radicalism. Cultural historians expanded the interpretation of sources, emphasizing the myriad experiences of and responses to patterns of change by historical actors.[11]

The debates between social and cultural historians are instructive, particularly for researchers interested in the workplace and consumer/marketplace history. In terms of the workplace, introducing more cultural methods, as this dissertation does, enhances our understanding of the dynamics that motivated workers and the myriad ways they resisted control. Rather than undermining the study of history, cultural historians can strengthen this disciplinary area. Indeed, in a different context, Peter N. Stearns and others have pointed out that cultural history and social history carry the potential for a constructive relationship.[12] In other areas, this collaboration has already produced fruitful scholarship. I see this dissertation as continuing that project within the field of labor history. The focus of scholars looking at the workplace in terms of gender has largely remained on socioeconomic dynamics, with cultural issues of identity less problematized or historicized.

In terms of scholars interested in the history of consumption and the marketplace, this dissertation highlights the role that the workplace (and workers) continued to play in this development. The line between the consumer and his or her workplace was blurry at

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centered. For example, see John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

[11] The literature on social history and cultural history is massive. For an introduction, see Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and Its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Also informative is Peter Novick *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

best. Building upon the work of Lizabeth Cohen, the post-war period was an important phase in the rise of the "consumer republic."[13] In Cohen's formulation, consumption takes the place of production as the basis of citizenship. However, consumption and production were intimately connected throughout the twentieth century, and particularly during the post-war period examined here. Unionized and non-unionized workers sometimes had competing notions of where consumption came from and what it meant.

In order to understand fully what happened in the U.S. workplace following World War II, this study traces the story of people that worked for three large defense manufacturers on Long Island from the 1930s to the 1970s. In ways, the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, Republic Aviation Corporation, and Sperry Gyroscope had much in common. A pioneering entrepreneur founded each business prior to WW II. They all pursued military contracts aggressively and benefited from the growing interest of the U.S. government and military in acquiring new technologies during the twentieth century. Grumman's largest customer was the U.S. Navy. Republic sold aircraft primarily to the U.S. Air Force. Sperry also did business with the military, particularly the Navy and Air Force. Each company experienced explosive growth during the war, which set the stage for dramatic workplace changes both during and after the conflict.

In other respects, however, the three companies were distinct. Despite the success of the war years, each firm fared differently afterwards. Difficulties plagued Republic throughout the post-war period. The company lost a crucial Air Force contract during the 1950s, was purchased by a larger rival in the 1960s, and eventually faded to a quiet end

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[12] Peter N. Stearns, "Social History Update: Encountering Postmodernism," *Journal of Social History* 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1990): 449-452

[13] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic. The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

during the 1980s. Sperry and Grumman both fared better for longer. Despite periodic setbacks, Sperry remained successful after the war, in part because it began looking for clients outside the military and branched into the computer industry. Despite (or perhaps because of) this success, a competitor eventually acquired Sperry in the 1980s and operations in Long Island basically ceased. In contrast, Grumman enjoyed a very good run following WW II, including contributing to the Apollo missions to put an American on the moon, and continued doing brisk business with the government into the early 1970s. However, the company faced a series of challenges beginning in the 1970s, and a rival eventually acquired it during the 1990s. While Grumman still maintains a small engineering presence on Long Island, its days as a prominent regional employer are long gone.

Most intriguingly, the workers in these three places responded differently to the changes ushered in during and after WW II. Significantly, workers at Sperry and Republic unionized in 1942 and 1950, respectively. On the other hand, Grummanites (as they proudly called themselves) resisted repeated efforts by a number of unions to organize them. The contrast here is striking. These manufacturers were all in the same place at the same time. Their workforces looked very similar. Yet, people made disparate choices about important decisions such as whether to join a union. How can we explain these differences?

This dissertation examines how social and cultural changes shaped the identities of men and women in the U.S. during the twentieth century, thus contributing to particular historical choices. Mutable categories such as gender, race, and class dramatically affected the way people thought about themselves and their relation to the

world, especially as that world changed. While white, male workers and managers at all three locations sought to reestablish these workplaces as masculine domains, the details looked different. In particular, workers at Grumman, both blue- and white-collar, embraced a rougher, more demonstrative form of masculinity. Blue- and white-collar workers at Republic and Sperry, on the other hand, exhibited more respectable versions of masculinity. Studying these companies helps us to understand national trends like deindustrialization and the declining unionization that followed, as well as other developments like suburbanization and consumerism.

The materials examined for this study include oral histories from nineteen people who worked for Grumman, Republic, or Sperry from the 1940s through the 1990s. Ten of these people worked at Grumman for all or part of their careers. Ten of them worked for Republic. Three of them worked at Sperry. As these numbers suggest, four of the people worked for more than one of the companies over the course of their lives. Three of the people moved from Republic to Grumman at some point in the 1950s or 1960s. One went from Republic to Sperry in the late 1950s. Obviously, these four oral histories are particularly valuable, since they allow for direct comparisons of memories about what distinguished Republic, Grumman, and Sperry.

The materials for this study also include archival sources from all three companies. Records for Sperry, housed at the Hagley Museum and Library, provide valuable insights about management and labor relations. A rich collection of company publications from Grumman and Republic are invaluable, and form a central part of the evidence examined here. In addition to many other publications and records related to the company, the Northrup Grumman History Center has an almost complete run of the

employee newsletter, the *Grumman Plane News*. Although the defunct Republic Aviation does not have an official history center, the Cradle of Aviation Museum has a fine collection of publications from Republic, including the employee newsletter, *Republic Aviation News*. The museum also has a number of publications related to Sperry, including the *Sperry News* and *Sperryscope*. These records provide new insights into the way that words and images became the language of power in the post-war workplace.

Union records also supply keen illumination on the discourse that shaped the lives of workers. In particular, the records for the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which organized workers at Republic in 1950, offer a fascinating window into the way that union representatives worked to redefine masculinity for the men they recruited. Correspondence, fliers, and other records demonstrate that union organizers reframed the rugged, individualistic masculinity dominant among workers as fraternal, respectable manliness. The records of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE), which represented workers at Sperry after 1949, also provide insight into labor relations at Sperry.[14]

Many of the sources that I draw upon are visual – editorial cartoons, classified advertisements, etc. Examining political cartoons, advertisements, and other visual sources has a richer pedigree than one might initially imagine. Cartoons were a source of interest to scholars throughout the postwar period. An early example of the interest of scholars in comics and editorial cartoons includes an article by Leo Bogart that appeared

[14] Workers at Sperry originally joined the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) in 1942. In the context of what became the Red Scare, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) created the IUE in 1949 to replace the UE.

in the *American Journal of Sociology* in July 1955.[15] Bogart observes that male tenement residents in New York City used newspaper comics as a convenient topic of conversation to make small talk and otherwise promote sociability. The gender bias of Bogart's sample (121 male tabloid readers) is relevant to this dissertation in two ways. First, it seems that many of the visual images analyzed in this study might well have served a similar function in their day – they were intended to provide male readers with fodder for jokes and banter on the job. However, the second point is perhaps even more interesting and undermines the first; namely, who were the intended readers of these images we shall be analyzing? A first answer might be "men, of course". However, a closer analysis of several of these images leaves the question a bit more open to debate.[16]

Combined, the visual and oral sources examined here offer an original idea: workplace tensions from the 1940s through the 1970s had cultural dimensions that shaped their outcomes. Men and women made choices about what to do for a living, where to work, and how to work based on a number of factors. Certainly, economic factors like income and job security influenced these decisions. In addition, a close examination of the corporate spaces where these men and women worked reveals that cultural factors also shaped their choices. Workers made choices about where to work or

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[15] Leo Bogart, "Adult Talk About Newspaper Comics," *American Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 1 (July 1955), 26-30. This is a synopsis of Bogart's doctoral dissertation, "The Comic Strips and Their Adult Readers" (University of Chicago, 1950). Bogart subsequently turned his attention to advertising and gained prominence within that field. For example, see Leo Bogart, "What One Little Ad Can Do," *Journal of Advertising Research* 10 (Aug. 1970): 3-13.

[16] Bogart's article is only one example of academic interest in cartoons and other visual media. A sample of others includes Lyle W. Shannon, "The Opinions of Little Orphan Annie and Her Friends," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1954), 169-179, and Hortense Powdermaker, "Celluloid Civilization," *Saturday Review of Literature* (Oct 14, 1950): 9-10,43-45. And of course, academic interest in the damaging effects of comic books on children broiled over into a popular topic with the success of Frederic Wertham's book, *Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: Rhinehart, 1954). For a recent treatment of Wertham's work, see Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: the Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), especially chapter four, "Youth Crisis: Comic Books and Controversy, 1945-1950."

how to work based, in part, on questions of identity. Did a particular occupation reinforce their sense of identity? Did that occupation reaffirm a male worker's identity as a man or a female worker's identity as a woman? While many scholars looking at the workplace have been inclined to breeze over questions like these, cultural dynamics played an important role in these workplaces. For example, chapter two discusses the way that the job of "administrative assistant" was, in the context of the 1950s, a position filled by men, which, in turn, reinforced a masculine identity.

By taking cultural dynamics seriously, this project makes a significant contribution to the historiography of labor relations by reexamining the question of declining unionization rates in the U.S. In addition to generally recognized factors such as deindustrialization and anti-union campaigns, this study assesses the role that gender, class, and race played in the decision of some workers to reject unions. In particular, femininity and masculinity were mutually constitutive categories that influenced the way men and women thought about themselves, the workplace, and organized labor.

One significant aspect of this contribution relates to the impact of masculinities on male workers' identities, which in turn shaped preconceptions regarding unions. Many men at Grumman resisted union campaigns because they perceived that membership would impinge upon their ability to define the workplace as a rough, masculine space. In practice, this meant that workers at Grumman feared that joining a union would reduce their autonomy within the workplace, while simultaneously weakening their job security. In other words, joining a union was actually perceived as emasculating. Union organizers had to combat these gender anxieties as they fought to recruit workers at other

locations such as Republic. Defending the workplace as a manly domain reinforced existing ideas about the male worker's identity and place in a changing social order.

Women and men responded to these developments in a variety of ways. Various sources reveal a surprising range of ambiguous reactions, from consternation to indifference to acceptance. One woman referred to a contemporary joke about the pestering she dealt with at work as "cute." One man expressed surprise at the harassment that took place in other workplaces. These equivocal responses point to one of the real contributions that cultural methods can make to historical analysis – understanding the mutually constitutive, performative aspect of gender identity in the U.S. following WW II. For many of the male workers, acts of harassment were an important method of demonstrating their masculinity. For many of the female workers, this harassment was unwanted attention that simultaneously reaffirmed their femininity. The responses of these workers to the changes around them shed light on the fluidity of identity, highlighting the way that gender was reasserted and reformed under new circumstances.

The setting for this study is crucial. Long Island is commonly associated with the phenomenon of suburbanization, perhaps most famously captured in the example of Levittown. But Long Island was also a major center for defense manufacturing and engineering. Indeed, these were substantial fuels for the suburban explosion of the post-war years. In other words, companies such as Grumman and Republic were in place on Long Island prior to the consumer surge that coincided with suburbanization. While the extensive literature on consumption in the U.S. focuses on spaces outside the workplace, this study looks at the impact of the culture of consumption within sites of production. Indeed, union members and company managers sometimes made competing claims on

the discourse of family, arguing that they, in fact, were the true provider of familial consumption and, by extension, familial security.

The narrative of the dissertation moves chronologically from the 1920s to the 1970s. Chapter 1 sets the stage by reviewing the companies' origins in the 1920s and 1930s. It then assesses the impact of a series of crises related to masculinity and identity in the US during the middle decades of the twentieth century. With unemployment hovering around 25% for much of the 1930s, many men experienced the Great Depression as an emasculating period – impotent patriarchs found themselves incapable of fulfilling expectations to provide for their families. World War II brought big changes as employment rose dramatically. However, this increase in employment was a complicated development since many of the new employees were women and other minorities. Indeed, chapter 1 also examines the subversive ways that femininity was redefined in these corporate cultures, transitioning from weak to strong in some contexts. With the end of hostilities came fears that the grim, emasculating days of the Depression would return.[17] Government, employers, and even unions urged women to go back home and make room for returning soldiers. In turn, reentering GIs were rehired and given other opportunities such as the GI bill.

Chapter 2 continues the narrative, picking up with the end of the war. In the workplaces examined here, the end of WW II produced a social and cultural backlash against women. Socially, managers and workers segregated women, creating policies to

[17] Indeed, readjusting into mainstream US culture proved very hard for some returning soldiers. Many veterans struggled with shell shock, or combat fatigue, as it came to be known during the WW II period. As Michael Kimmel has pointed out, many Americans responded to the renewed threat to masculinity by emphasizing fatherhood. Social scientists such as Talcott Parsons insisted on the centrality of fatherhood for the normal development of children and adolescent males. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 227-228.

govern their movements within corporate spaces. The responses included the reaffirmation of separate spheres and traditional gender identities at all three companies. These workplaces were physically divided into separate spheres, with men reoccupying the shop floor and women removed to office spaces. This arrangement led to limited economic opportunities for women and other minorities. The neo-traditional social arrangement of the workplace into separate spheres for men and women lasted for roughly twenty-five years, from the mid-1940s to the late 1960s.

Significantly, the newly gendered workplace influenced unions, too. Chapter 2 assesses the ways that labor organizers reframed the rugged, individualistic masculinity that dominated among male workers at Republic as respectable, fraternal manliness. Union records show that this was a formidable task, requiring years of patient effort on the part of IAM representatives.

While the IAM may have succeeded in reframing masculinity for blue-collar Republic workers, Chapter 3 parses out differences in the development of masculinity for blue-collar and white-collar men elsewhere in the 1940s and early 1950s. In the ten years or so following WW II, representations of engineers and other white-collar workers at Grumman and elsewhere shifted from hypomasculine to hypermasculine. Company publications show white-collar men demonstrating their virility through a number of means. Likewise, representations of blue-collar men altered during this period, too. Company publications show a homogenization of images of blue-collar men, consolidating into an emphasis on physical strength and appearance.

Chapter 3 continues analyzing the impact of these cultural developments on unions. The chapter concludes with the examination of a bitter internal struggle for

control of the IAM Local in 1951. Even after the union succeeded at Republic, critics worried about the impact it was having on gender roles. In addition to accusations of financial malfeasance, critics implied the union had run amok by promoting women to important (presumably male) positions.

Chapter 4 continues examining problems of perception related to unions in other contexts throughout the late 1950s and 1960s. Perceptions about the negative impact of unions on paternalism, labor relations and strikes, and job security all played a role in preconceptions about unions. The chapter contains a reconsideration of the concept of paternalism, which many employees regarded as a positive relationship with the companies under consideration. In particular, workers at Grumman thought of paternalism as a positive attribute. Moreover, because the presence of unions at Sperry and Republic disrupted paternalism, some Grummanites perceived unions as undesirable. Furthermore, evidence from oral histories and contemporary reports demonstrates that workers at Grumman also thought that a union would actually hurt job security by destroying a culture of meritocracy. Workers elsewhere blamed the IUE and IAM for strikes and poor labor relations. While the majority of the discussion in chapter 4 revolves around negative perceptions of organized labor, some people did offer positive evaluations of unions. Several people who were not in unions acknowledged that collective bargaining resulted in pay raises and increased benefits for themselves, too.

In addition, many people worried about the impact of unions on the neo-traditional gender roles that the workplace reinforced. White collar and blue collar men, particularly at Grumman, worried that a union would undermine their particular styles of masculinity. In a sense, from the late 1940s to the mid 1960s, workers at all three

locations responded to radical social and cultural changes by embracing neo-traditional gender roles for men and women.

Chapter 5 examines the ways the responses of workers were thoroughly undermined during the late 1960s and 1970s. Two factors contributed to this process. The actions of employers contributed to a declining sense of autonomy among male workers. Increased routine and bureaucracy left some workers frustrated. Also, government initiatives such as affirmative action changed the makeup of the workforces considerably, which disrupted the neo-traditional social arrangements that employers and employees had orchestrated following WW II. Some women and men embraced the emerging social order of the 1960s and 1970s, while others responded equivocally. The final chapter concludes with an analysis of the strong sense of loss and nostalgia that comes through in the oral histories of many former employees.

Chapter 1: "No McDonald's to work in." Sperry, Grumman, and Republic in the twentieth century

Introduction

In 1932, the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation (GAEC, or simply Grumman) narrowly averted catastrophe. While burning garbage outdoors, shop worker Joe Armstrong inadvertently set fire to the meadow surrounding the Valley Stream, NY hangar where the two-year old company had recently relocated. Frantic, Armstrong ran inside and blurted, "Fire, fire, the field's on fire!" Fellow metalworker Ed Weick yelled back, "Who started it?" Armstrong earnestly replied, "I did," which prompted Weick to bellow, "Well, then, you put it out." As the fire grew, everyone inside the plant realized the gravity of the situation and quickly grabbed whatever was available to swat the flames. Armstrong later recalled, "Every once in a while I'd be bent over and someone would give me a clout and yell, 'Why did you have to start this?'"[1] Fortunately, the workers doused the flames without any injuries beyond some burnt eyelashes, and the young company avoided a potentially devastating setback.

The story of Joe Armstrong and his grass fire offers a glimpse into the masculine world of workers at companies such as Grumman, Sperry Gyroscope, and the Republic Aviation Corporation (RAC, or simply Republic) prior to World War II. While all of these companies were considered large employers by 1939, the workforces were relatively small (less than 1,000) and consisted almost entirely of working class men,

[1] Joe Armstrong, as quoted in Richard Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 62.

many of whom came from Old World, craft-based, artisanal backgrounds. The workers at these plants were almost exclusively white, though they also came from a hodge-podge of ethnic backgrounds, including Italian. The working class, artisanal traditions of the employees infused their workplaces with a particular kind of "rough" masculinity, one that reflected the racial and class background of the workers.[2] So, for example, when Joe Armstrong made the mistake of nearly burning the workplace down, his white, working class coworkers responded first by refusing to come to his aid, and then by yelling and punching him. This sort of confrontational, rough response contrasted sharply with the low-key "respectable" masculinity embodied by some of the executive or white-collar employees. In a separate incident, Joe Armstrong also managed to break a very expensive thermometer. In response, Leroy Grumman (the president and co-founder of the company) merely "came out and shook his head sadly."[3] Significantly, the corporate officer did not raise his voice to Armstrong, much less hit him. Instead, Leroy Grumman deployed a different type of masculinity, one that relied on dignity and respectability rather than roughhousing.[4]

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[2] The reference to masculinity, and "rough" masculinity in particular, should tip the reader to one of the comparatively recent historiographic trends that my work draws upon: masculinities studies. The literature on masculinity has grown dramatically over the past ten to fifteen years. Landmark works include Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996) and R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). As Kimmel has pointed out, this wave of masculinities studies is heavily indebted to the work of feminist scholars who began examining gender as one of the principal axes around which identity is organized. See Michael S. Kimmel, "Reading Men: Men, Masculinity, and Publishing," *Contemporary Sociology* 21, no 2 (Mar., 1992): 162-171. The reference to "rough" masculinity is significant as well. Several scholars, including labor historians, have begun to examine the question of multiple masculinities, and rough versus respectable masculinity in particular, during the inter-war period. In other words, manliness meant different things to different socio-economic groups. For example, see Stephen Meyer, "Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960," in Roger Horowitz, ed., *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America* (New York: Routledge, 2001): 13-32.

[3] Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 45.

[4] To anticipate my argument a bit, subsequent chapters will examine what happened at these companies as large waves of white-collar employees entered the workplace during and after World War II, bringing with them a competing sensibility of "respectable" masculinity.

The kind of rough masculinity that dominated the workplace culture at Sperry, Grumman, and Republic prior to World War II also mingled with racial and class values to create a strong sense of bonding and loyalty among the workers. The rough, masculine culture emphasized self-sufficiency, physical prowess, and posturing that intensely linked the workers around the categories of race, class, and gender. In order to fully understand this phenomenon we must begin with a closer look at the origins of these corporations. In turn, the origins of the companies helps explain the intense loyalty that the workers had for their employers, as well as the role that ethnicity and race played in the workplace culture prior to World War II. These factors help to explain the first major shift that this dissertation follows: the strong reactions that some employees had to the broad social and cultural changes ushered in during World War II, such as the entrance of large numbers of women and other minorities into the workplace. In this respect, examining the lives of workers at Sperry, Grumman, and Republic helps us to understand the impact that macro-level changes in the US economy and culture had on identity formation for individuals at large manufacturers.

Companies' Origins and Contexts

Sperry, Grumman, and Republic fit within broader national developments that occurred during the first half of the twentieth century. Developments tied to the Second Industrial Revolution shaped each corporation. The rise of mass markets, new technologies, and financial markets created a fertile space for manufacturing new products. In addition, the

expansion of the federal government during the New Deal went hand-in-hand with keen interest in acquiring these new technologies. Certainly, the strong personal connections between the founders, workers, and various branches of the military also helped in making the U.S. government the biggest customer for these new manufacturers. In turn, these companies laid the foundations for one of the most dramatic social changes of the twentieth century: suburbanization.

In some ways, life for the typical Sperry, Grumman, or Republic worker embodied the dramatic demographic changes of the twentieth century up to and including World War II. While the majority of the US population lived in rural areas in 1900, the 1920 census revealed that for the first time more Americans lived in urban places (a population center with 2,500 people or more) than rural. In addition, suburban spaces began to proliferate during this period. Sperry, Grumman, and Republic were all located in Nassau County, which began the twentieth century as an economic satellite of New York City, still largely rural and with virtually nothing in the way of manufacturing jobs. In fact, the three companies under study played a pivotal role in transforming Nassau County (and Long Island more generally) from a bucolic home for farmers and urban commuters in the 1930s to an important epi-center of military and industrial production in the 1940s, increasingly independent economically from Manhattan and the other boroughs of New York City.[5] In this respect, Long Island exemplified many of the dramatic national trends taking place in the decades leading up to WW II, such as the beginning of suburbanization. Table 1.1 shows the changing population of Nassau and

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[5] For an overview of the role that industrial production for the military played in the growth of Nassau County, see Geoffrey Rossano, "Suburbia Armed: Nassau County Development and the Rise of the Aerospace Industry, 1909-60," in Roger W. Lotchin, ed., *The Martial Metropolis: US Cities in War and Peace* (New York: Praeger, 1984): 61-88.

Suffolk Counties between 1930 and 1960.[6] Particularly noteworthy here is the dramatic combined increase from just over 460,000 in 1930 to almost two million by 1960. For this reason, Long Island is the perfect setting for a study such as this. As the population expanded dramatically, government and business leaders carefully controlled who entered and thereby benefited from the new opportunities emerging on Long Island. Consequently, Long Island became a powerful epicenter for creating and reinforcing racial, class, and gender norms.

The population migration was entwined with other large-scale economic changes prior to World War II. Companies such as Proctor & Gamble were in the process of turning local, personal, credit-based customers into national, anonymous, cash-paying mass consumers.[7] Changes in technology facilitated this shift to mass markets, which set the stage for the mass-produced, mass-distributed markets that we take for granted today. The trend toward increased consumerism continued during the twentieth century, reaching especially noticeable heights in areas like Long Island. Workers at companies such as Sperry, Grumman, and Republic took part in this revolution by purchasing newly constructed houses, new cars, and other consumer goods.

The Second Industrial Revolution, dating from roughly the 1840s to the 1950s, facilitated the shift to consumerism. Rapid transformations in transportation and communication technologies marked this period, beginning with the railroad, telegraph, telephone and radio, and ending with the car and airplane. In this respect, all three of the

[6] Using the census to provide corresponding numbers for the size of the workforce in Nassau and Suffolk over a similar period is more problematic, as demonstrated by tables 1.2 and 1.3.
[7] The literature on the "consumption revolution" that occurred around the turn of the twentieth century is quite extensive. Seminal works include Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); William Leach. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books,

companies under study were part of the latter stages of the Second Industrial Revolution. Elmer Ambrose Sperry created the Sperry Gyroscope Company in 1910 in order to develop and market gyroscope-based technologies for naval customers. Initially established in Brooklyn, NY, Sperry moved to Nassau County during World War II in order to take advantage of the greater space available. In 1929 Leroy Randle Grumman, the eponymous founder of the GAEC, decided to strike out on his own in the rapidly growing field of aircraft manufacturing. Having grown up in Huntington, NY, one of Grumman's primary motivations for starting his own company was a desire to stay on Long Island. Alexander P. de Seversky, founder of the company that became the Republic, also entered the business of building aircraft in 1931 after emigrating from the Soviet Union in 1918.[8] As with Grumman, Republic started on Long Island in order to take advantage of open space. Republic built its first production facilities in Farmingdale on land that was previously potato farms.

In important respects, the stories of each of the three companies under consideration are very similar. An innovative entrepreneur who was interested in an emerging technology founded each corporation. Each company pursued military contracts immediately. All three employers experienced explosive growth during World War II. Despite the success of the war years, difficulties plagued Republic for most of its existence and the company finally ceased operations in 1987 after a long decline. Sperry

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1993); and Lawrence B. Glickman, ed. *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[8] The fact that de Seversky was an immigrant from the Soviet Union also illustrates a common theme in US culture: the immigrant success story. Though not quite a Horatio Alger, de Seversky did manage to relocate to the US and start a business. As we shall see, the business itself was not necessarily a successful one. Though this story lacks the appeal of the typical immigrant success story, it is perhaps a bit more representative of the typical business experience. For a brief biography of de Seversky, see the introduction to Alexander P. de Seversky, *America: Too young to Die!* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), especially 15-17.

and Grumman fared better for longer, but larger concerns ultimately acquired both of them during the consolidation of the US defense industry of the 1980s and 1990s.

These companies – Grumman in particular – were also noteworthy because their beginnings were tied to the development of financial markets, another influential force in twentieth century US history. Prior to the crash of 1929, millions of new investors poured money into the stock market as ownership of stock gained popular acceptance. This fed a wave of corporate mergers that swept over the burgeoning aircraft manufacturing industry of the late 1920s. Following Charles Lindbergh's successful flight from New York to Paris in 1927, speculators anticipated a rapid increase in aircraft manufacturing and travel. To this point, the aircraft manufacturing industry in the US had been primarily the province of small companies.[9] In an effort to gain a controlling share of the market, financiers began acquiring smaller manufacturers and merging them into larger conglomerates. In fact, a series of such mergers led to Grumman's founding. In 1927, Leroy Grumman was working for the Loening Aeronautical Engineering Corporation, an airplane manufacturer based on Long Island. The banking firm Hayden, Stone, and Company swept up Loening in one of these mergers in 1928 and announced plans to merge it with the Keystone Aircraft Corporation.[10] In turn, North American Aviation Inc. acquired Keystone in 1929 and moved what was left of Loening's operation to Keystone's plant in Bristol, Pennsylvania.[11] Rather than move to Pennsylvania, Leroy

[9] Rene J. Francillon, *Grumman Aircraft Since 1929* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 3.
[10] "Airplane Makers to Unite," *New York Times* Oct. 17, 1928: 47.
[11] In fact, Sperry went through a similar experience during this period. But where the corporate histories of Grumman and Republic are relatively straightforward and easy to relate, Sperry's is complicated – the company was involved in a number of corporate mergers and takeovers throughout the twentieth century, and was reorganized or combined with other companies no less than three times.

Grumman decided to start his own company, and thus was born the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation.

After several years of early success, Sperry's corporate history also intersected with the North American Aviation Company. Founder Elmer Ambrose Sperry (1860-1930) is still credited as the "father of modern navigation technology."[12] He established the Sperry Gyroscope Company on April 19, 1910, in Brooklyn, NY, with no outside financing, no products, and no employees. Elmer Sperry did have a great deal of innovation, though. A prolific inventor, he had some 400 patents at the time of his death. The most important of these related to the use of gyroscopes in navigation devices for ships. In fact, the gyrocompass was so successful that the Navy became the fledgling companies' biggest customer, and by World War I the gyrocompass was standard equipment on every navy vessel.[13] This same technology was later adapted for use in aircraft, torpedoes, and spacecraft. The company was so successful during this early phase that larger corporations grew interested in acquiring it, and Elmer Sperry eventually sold it to the North American Aviation Company in 1928.[14]

Under this new ownership, Sperry Gyroscope expanded rapidly within its Brooklyn location. Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, the company's workforce grew as it branched into other areas of technology, including aircraft components such as bombsights, fire control systems, radar systems, and automated take off and landing systems. By the dawn of WW II, Sperry was well situated within the defense industry.

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[12] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/theymadeamerica/whomade/sperry_hi.html, accessed on 12/30/04.
[13] http://www.hagley.lib.de.us/1915.htm, accessed on 12/30/04.
[14] http://www.sperrymarine.northropgrumman.com/Company-Information/Corporate-History/Sperry-History/ accessed on 6/21/05. See also "Sperry Plants Join Curtiss in Merger," *New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1928: 30. North American Aviation later became Rockwell. Sperry died in 1930, just two years after selling the company.

Unlike Grumman and Sperry, the company that eventually became Republic experienced severe growing pains during its early years. Republic started life in 1931 as the Seversky Aircraft Corporation (SAC), the brainchild of founder Alexander P. de Seversky, an immigrant from the Soviet Union. Operating out of Farmingdale, NY, SAC (and later Republic) underwent serious growing pains such as bitter disputes between top executives and investors over financial planning, research, and production. By 1939, the conflict between de Seversky and the Board of Directors was so severe that the Board surreptitiously replaced de Seversky as president and reorganized the company as the Republic Aviation Corporation while he was overseas attempting to secure new business. Despite these contentious management issues, Republic managed to produce some very sophisticated planes such as the SEV-3 amphibian in 1933 and the P-47 Thunderbolt in 1940.[15]

Sperry, Grumman, and Republic were not just successful because of the technology they were manufacturing, but also because of their primary customer – the US government.[16] The founders of Grumman in particular decided to focus on the military market since it was the only one actually producing orders when they began. In 1929 there were essentially four emerging markets that the GAEC could have attempted to enter – the military, airlines, businesses (or wealthy individuals), and private fliers of more moderate means.[17] Recognizing that the latter three were even less well-developed buyers than the military, Leroy Grumman and his partners decided to focus on the Navy (even though this market was already dominated by other, established manufacturers such

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[15] Joshua Stoff, *The Thunder Factory: An Illustrated History of the Republic Aviation Corporation* (Motorbooks International, 1990), 7.
[16] As we shall see, an increasing partnership between government and industry actually started during World War I, and continued as a marked trend in US business history for much of the rest of the century.

as Loening).[18] This basically conservative approach to business decision-making was a hallmark of the company.[19] Republic followed a similar strategy and focused on military customers, though constant contract overages and financial difficulties wracked the company. Sperry was the most diverse of the three companies in this respect, designing and producing components for a variety of clients, though the biggest was the US military. Thus, all three companies were successful because of the increasing ties between government and industry, and particularly congress's desire for the latest technology and aircraft as visible symbols of growing US power and prestige.[20]

Another reason that the founders of Grumman and Republic chose to focus on military markets was personal. Leroy Grumman was a test pilot for the US Navy and Alexander P. de Seversky was a combat pilot in the Soviet Air Force before emigrating to the United States.[21] The Navy was ultimately the single biggest contractor for the GAEC, just as the Air Force became the biggest buyer for Republic.

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[17] Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 28.

[18] However, Grumman did not ignore the potential that the other markets offered, either. For example, the success of their amphibious Goose plane kept them interested in the commercial market throughout the 1930s. See Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 126. During the 1970s the company introduced the Gulfstream, a plane intended for corporate travel that performed very well –in terms of both functioning and sales.

[19] In subsequent analyses, this conservative financial style had detractors as well as proponents. For a positive assessment, see Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*. However, other commentators have suggested this cautious style was one of the factors that led to Grumman's takeover by Northrup in 1996. See George M Skurla and William H Gregory, *Inside the Iron Works: How Grumman's Glory Days Faded* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 9-11, 204-6. In particular, Skurla suggests this cautious approach hurt the company in the long run, preventing it from pursuing other opportunities and acquisitions and thereby growing into one of the giants of the defense industry.

[20] For a useful study of the inter-war defense industry, see Jacob A. Vander Meulen, *The Politics of Aircraft: Building an American Military Industry* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991). Vander Meulen situates the growth of the defense industry (particularly aircraft manufacturing) within the larger political tensions and debates of this period. So, even though defense manufacturers were dependent on the federal government, Congress wanted the developing industry to embody traditional republican values: free-market competition, the independent small firm, and, most paradoxically, small government.

[21] Leroy Grumman's involvement with the Navy began shortly after he graduated from college. When the US entered World War I, he enlisted in the US Naval Reserve, eventually becoming a Machinist's Mate 2nd Class. Given his engineering background, the Navy sent Grumman to Columbia University for a six-week course on the operation of petrol engines in submarine chasers. Subsequently, the Navy accepted

In fact, many of the employees at Grumman and Republic were veterans.[22] This personnel connection between the companies and the military also had a dramatic impact on the culture of the workplaces. Particularly in the case of Grumman, the shop floor was a rough, masculine world.[23] Before the war, the extremely limited number of women present in the workplace, particularly the shop floor, reinforced this definition of the workplace as a hyper-masculine world, a notion that WW II would seriously challenge as unprecedented numbers of women entered the workplace.

One of the factors that led to the increasing size of the federal government and the expanding role it played in the airplane manufacturing industry and the economy more generally was the New Deal. Prior to the crash of 1929, the US government had noticeably less influence on the private sector than governments in many other industrialized nations.[24] Over the course of the 1930s, government regulation was

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Grumman for aviation duty and sent him to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for ground training. He was posted for advanced training in Pensacola, Florida and graduated in September 1918. Grumman remained in Florida as a pilot instructor for a bomber squadron. See Terry Treadwell, *Ironworks: Grumman's Fighting Aeroplanes* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1990), 9

[22] Nine of the oral history subjects served in the military. Robert Tallman and John Caruso both served in the Navy and worked for Grumman. Michael Hlinko was also in the Navy and worked for both Republic and Grumman. John Lowe was in the Marines and Tom Gwynne was in the Air Force prior to working for Grumman. Donald Riehl served in the Army and later worked for both Republic and Grumman. Frank Taylor switched from the Coast Guard to the Army, and later worked for Republic and Sperry. Eugene Burnett served in the Army before joining Republic. Merven Mandel was the only Sperry employee with a military background – he served in the Navy. Eight of the oral history subjects had no military experience – Mary Bloom, Brigid Murphy, William Wait, and Ben Ezra of Republic, Gabriel Parrish and Mort Hans from Sperry, and Catherine O'Regan and Carol Nelson of Grumman.

[23] In this respect, my work builds upon Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004). Jarvis' fascinating study charts the way that idealized representation of young, white servicemen's bodies became symbols of U.S. power. While Jarvis focuses on the representation of servicemen, I find that the hypermasculine culture that developed within the military during the war also followed them into the workplaces they entered, such as Grumman and Republic. Indeed, the reason why I cite Jarvis's work here, in a section on the prewar period, is that other evidence suggests that the emphasis on the virility of working class men actually began during the Great Depression. See, for example, Jeffrey Ryan Suzik, "'Building Better Men': The CCC Boy and the Changing Social Ideal of Manliness," *Men & Masculinities* 2, no. 2 (Oct 1999): 152-79. Suzik uses the Civilian Conservation Corps as an entering point to examine "the shift from the athletic manual laborer of the early 1930s to the highly trained citizen-soldier of the immediate pre-World War II period."

[24] For a brief overview of these developments, see McCraw, *American Business*, 68-69.

established in a number of new industries, including airlines, trucking, and interstate utilities.[25] As the federal government expanded and increased spending on social programs, military spending went up as well. This new demand created huge opportunities for entrepreneurial aviators like Leroy Grumman and Alexander de Seversky.

In conclusion, these companies were successful prior to WW II because they were all working on emerging technologies at a time when the federal government was increasing in size and power, and becoming increasingly interested in developing and acquiring these technologies. Consequently, they all experienced substantial growth during the 1930s. By 1939 Sperry's payroll had grown to 600, Grumman's was 1,000, and Republic had 500 employees.[26] The personal connections between the founders and employees of these companies and the various branches of the US military had an important impact on the culture of the workplaces, as these largely male workforces defined the workplace – particularly the shop floor – as a rough, masculine space. The next section examines this issue of workplace culture and employee relations more closely.

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[25] For an excellent collection of essays providing a critical reassessment of the causes of the Great Depression, the impact of the New Deal on liberalism, and the underlying causes and significance of the end of the New Deal order, see Steve Fraser and Gary Gersle, ed., *The Rise and Fall of New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). For an analysis of the impact of gender norms on New Deal legislation, see Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994). The debate over the New Deal and the legacy of welfare policies appears to be far from over, too. For a recent example, see Emilie Stoltzfus, *Citizen, Mother, Worker: Debating Public Responsibility for Child Care after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[26] Figures for Sperry come from Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 53, folder 16, "Census of Personnel, 1944-54." Figures for Grumman come from "Grumman's Historical Overview," a chart available at the Northrup Grumman History Center, Bethpage, NY. A note is in order regarding figures for Republic – as mentioned above, 1939 was the year that Seversky Aircraft Corporation's Board of Directors voted Alexander de Seversky out as President of the company and changed the name to Republic Aviation Corporation. To cut costs, incoming president W. Wallace Kellett reduced the workforce from 500 to 185 by the end of 1939. Stoff, *The Thunder Factor*, 33.

Loyalty and Employee Relations Prior to WW II

Workers at all three companies – but Grumman in particular – displayed a great deal of loyalty to their employers prior to WW II. This was due in part to gratitude over steady employment during the lean years of the 1930s. Workers were also loyal because of a shared sense of adventure – the fact that these people were working in an exciting, cutting-edge field led to a strong sense of camaraderie. This gratitude also had to do with the paternalistic relationship that these employers sought to establish with workers. Perhaps surprisingly, the paternalistic relationship between company and employee did not bother workers. Indeed, many of them embraced this development as a positive thing, filling needs that otherwise might go unmet.

Because the three companies under study were part of the Second Industrial Revolution, they largely managed to avoid the privations of the Great Depression, partly by turning to the government as a client. Even though much of the business community suffered dramatic reversals during this period (including such core industries as banking, construction, and agriculture), several newly created companies connected with the emerging airline industry did quite well. As we have already seen, Grumman and Republic both launched during the opening stages of the Depression.[27] Republic did have financial difficulties during this period, though they seem to have been related to poor management rather than the struggling economy. Regardless, the ability of employers to simply stay afloat at a time when unemployment hovered around twenty-five percent was remarkable. The workers themselves recognized this, and they often felt

[27] Other companies connected to commercial aviation that prospered during the 1930s include Continental Airlines and US Airways. See McCraw, *American Business*, 40.

a sense of allegiance to the company because of it, especially at Grumman where the relationship between workers and management was already strong.

This sense of loyalty often had a direct impact on the attempts of unions to organize workers prior to WW II. Despite the fact that the 1930s were a time of busy union activity and expansion, none of the companies under consideration had to withstand a serious organization drive by a major union. In order to stave off unionization, Sperry Gyroscope even went so far as to attempt to create its own employee representation plan, which the employees initially rejected.

Sperry's attempt to form a company union is easy to understand in the context of the larger development of welfare capitalism, a concerted effort by employers to undermine the appeal of labor unions in the 1920s and 1930s. According to Progressive Era reformer and future member of the National Labor Relations Board William M. Leiserson, however, the Sperry plan had a different twist.[28] In an article examining the pitfalls of unions (both company and labor), Leiserson noted that Sperry Gyroscope developed a plan for a company union in the mid-1920s and presented it to employees who "overwhelmingly voted it down."[29] However, he relates that two years later the employees presented the company with a plan of their own, which was ultimately

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[28] Leiserson was a student of John R. Commons and is perhaps best remembered for his connections with the American Association for Labor Legislation. He was a member of the NLRB from 1939-43, and also chairman of the National Mediation Board. For background on Leiserson, see Gary M. Fink, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of American Labor* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Pres, 1984); a special AHR Forum on "'Intellectuals' versus 'Workers'" from Apr., 1991, especially Leon Fink, "'Intellectuals' versus 'Workers': Academic Requirements and the Creation of Labor History," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (Apr., 1991): 395-421, and Leon Fink, "Leon Fink Responds," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (Apr., 1991): 429-431; and Udo Sautter, "Unemployment," www.anb.org/articles/cush/e1569.html, *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, Paul Boyer, ed., 2001, Accessed 7/25/05.
[29] William M. Leiserson, "Employee Representation: A Warning to Both Employers and Unions," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (June 1928), 107.

adopted. "This company union, then, is the employees' own plan."[30] For this reason, according to Leiserson, the company union at Sperry (the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers of America) actually was an authentic form of employee representation.

One of the driving forces of welfare capitalism, including attempts such as Sperry's to create a company union, was large, active Personnel departments. Personnel (or Human Resource) departments began to emerge en masse in the US during World War I as employers sought to limit high workforce turnover rates, poor productivity, and strikes connected with the maturing organized labor movement.[31] Some employers recognized that the capriciousness and severity of some supervisors and workplace conditions during the 1910s and 1920s contributed to a number of these problems. In response, many companies began to transfer a variety of supervisory functions such as hiring and benefit management to a new group of employment or personnel managers.[32] Scholars have argued that another primary motive for this development was the huge surge of organized labor during this period. Under the leadership of Samuel Gompers,

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[30] Ibid. The size of Sperry's workforce during this period is particularly noteworthy since it was much smaller than the workforce that Sperry employed during and even after WW II. Between 1920 and 1930, the number of employees dropped dramatically as the fallout from World War I continued to ripple through the economy, and then grew just as dramatically, reaching 1920 levels again by 1930. To illustrate, the payroll went from 690 employees in 1920 to 424 in 1925 before increasing again to 678 by 1930. Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 53, folder 16, "Census of Personnel, 1944-54."

[31] For a succinct summary of the history of personnel departments during the first half of the twentieth century, see Bruce E. Kaufman, "John R. Commons and the Wisconsin School on Industrial Relations Strategy and Policy," *Industrial & Labor Relations Review* 57, no. 3 (October 2003): 2-30. A more detailed account can be found in the work of Sanford Jacoby, particularly *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) and *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[32] Richard Gillespie, *Manufacturing Knowledge: A history of the Hawthorne Experiments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 5-6. Gillespie's work represents an excellent study of the way that these new personnel managers turned to social scientists to help them manage workers by attempting to increase both productivity and contentment. In the face of unionization, managers wanted a way to make scientific management palatable for workers. For this, they turned to psychology, which offered them a

the American Federation of Labor (AFL) became a substantial economic and political force in American life. Alarmed by the sudden gains of unions during the Great War, employers deployed a variety of methods to cull employee loyalty and dissuade them of the idea that union membership was a good thing. In some cases, this consisted of overt manipulation and violence. But in others, employers sought to "bribe" their employees by spending money on improving employee relations, including the formation of personnel departments or company-sponsored employee unions. The collective response of US businesses to the pressure of unions in the 1910s and 1920s is commonly referred to as welfare capitalism.[33]

The entire system of welfare capitalism took a beating during the Great Depression, and was almost mortally wounded by the National Labor Relations Act (commonly known as the Wagner Act) in 1935. As documented by Lizabeth Cohen and others, employers initially tried to respond to the pressures of the Depression themselves by seeking to relieve the privations of workers through private, rather than public, relief

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way to alleviate the boredom and alienation that accompanied rationalized tasks without effecting structural changes.

[33] This is not a universal interpretation among scholars. For example, David Brody has argued that the rise of "welfare work" was not purely motivated by anti-unionism or a desire to increase productivity. Another important motive was a genuine sense of obligation or trusteeship. Moreover, Brody argues that this system worked – the Depression undid welfare capitalism, rather than any internal contradictions or conflicts of interests. See David Brody, "The Rise and Decline of Welfare Capitalism," in *Workers in Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980): 48-81, especially 53. In a similar vein, I found oral history narrators offering similar arguments while researching this dissertation. In other words, people like Mort Hans argued that prior to the 1940s, aircraft producers were motivated by more than just a desire to suppress unions. The management of these companies sometimes demonstrated a genuine sense of obligation or commitment to the workers, which also overlapped with identity formation for employees around the axes of race, gender, and class. I will discuss Hans more below. On the question of welfare capitalism prior to World War II, other scholars have taken a different tact and argued that this system never really won the support of workers to begin with. For example, see Stuart Brandes, *American Welfare Capitalism, 1880-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 136-141 and Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 95-97. Still others have argued for a third interpretation, suggesting that workers and employers reached a consensus where employees rejected unionization, but still negotiated concessions. See Herald Zahazi, "Negotiated Loyalty: Welfare Capitalism and the Shoeworkers of Endicott Johnson, 1920-1940," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 602-20.

efforts.[34] The short life of these relief efforts, followed by the quick dismantling by many companies of welfare capitalist programs such as paid vacations, left many workers bitter and distrustful. Already weakened by the privations of the Depression, the passage of the Wagner Act seemed to put the final nail in the coffin of welfare capitalism. As discussed later in this chapter, the Wagner Act allowed for a new wave of labor organization that ushered in an explosive growth period for organized labor.

Despite these setbacks, however, some employers dusted themselves off and resuscitated welfare capitalism in a new guise following WW II. Scholars have argued that, among other strategies, employers persuaded their employees to reject unions by instilling a sense of benevolent paternalism within the workforce. In other words, companies did a very good job of reviving welfare capitalism after the war. The rejuvenated version of welfare capitalism turned on the ability of employers to reframe power relations as being mutual or shared. In other words, this new benevolent paternalism was consensual – it involved an accepting decision from employees to be part of a harmonious community within the workplace.[35]

One of the advantages of this dissertation is a comparative examination of the experiences of both unionized and non-unionized companies before and after the war. Since these three companies were located in the same region, the demographic profiles of their workforces looked quite similar. Yet the workers at each company made different choices about whether to unionize or not. My research demonstrates that one of the key differences between these workforces relates to the role that gender identity played in the

[34] See Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), especially 238-246.

workplace. Respectable masculinity and femininity played important roles at Republic and Sperry after the war, whereas rough gender roles became more prominent in the corporate culture of Grumman. All three companies had large, active personnel departments before and after WW II.[36] Grumman's personnel department managed to stave off unionization throughout this period, whereas the workers at Sperry organized during the war and employees at Republic unionized after WW II.

Beyond the success of welfare capitalist policies, workers recognized (and were grateful for) the value of full-time employment throughout the period leading up to the war. Catherine ("Kay") O'Regan, a former employee of Grumman, recalled how difficult it was to find a job during the 1930s. O'Regan was born in 1919, so her first experiences with trying to find work during her teenage years coincided with the desperation of the 1930s:

> Well, the depression years lasted until the war started. And so for young people there were no jobs for anyone. If you were a mature person, then jobs were still hard to come by, but there was no work for starters. No McDonald's to work in. You had mature people pedaling bicycles, selling Good Humor ice cream bars. So essentially there was no work for kids.[37]

O'Regan also alluded to the difficulty that younger people had finding work in the 1930s. This is consistent with the available records from the time – the workforces of these

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[35] See Jacoby, *Modern Manors*, and Tone, *The Business of Benevolence*. Tone argues, among other things, that employers used welfare capitalism to promote an anti-statist mentality in the US, thus preventing the rise of a welfare state.
[36] As noted above, all three corporations were in good company in this regard. Sanford Jacoby points out that between 1915 and 1920 the percentage of firms with more than 250 employees (large employers) with personnel departments increased from five percent to twenty-five percent. See Jacoby, *Employing Bureacracy*, 137.
[37] KO, 7/10/03.

companies consisted largely of mature workers who had prior experience.[38] This sense of gratitude, then, was not a case of false-consciousness or naiveté on the part of employees. Rather, they felt gratitude toward the companies that kept them gainfully employed.

Furthermore, the sense of loyalty that stemmed from steady employment prior to the war functioned at all levels within the workforce, not just among people working on the shop floor. For example, Mort Hans, a retired engineer from Sperry, described the work environment and culture at Sperry prior to World War II thus:

> At that time [from the late 1920s to the early 1940s] engineering, I think, for a large company was quite different than what it became after the war in particular and certainly today. I think in many cases that people looked on their positions as long term positions with the companies that they were with. And I think they fostered better relationships and there was a strong feeling of loyalty between those people and the senior people at the companies.[39]

When I asked Hans whether he attributed this to management or the people working at the companies, he continued:

> I think part of it was that so much of what was being done in engineering was new. And there was therefore a cohesiveness in trying to achieve goals that developed among the people working on the programs. There were relationships that were developed in all the new companies being formed in the 1930s that just continued through. Perhaps there was a feeling of loyalty in many cases between the founders and the employees who were with them from the beginning and that in turn was passed on.

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[38] In fact, Grumman also encouraged this sense of gratitude among workers by pointing out retention rates and length-of-service awards for employees, both before and after the war. For example, one article published shortly after WW II noted, "Personnel records show that the overall length of employment time for foremen averages 11 ½ years and … the combined hours of the 98 men add up to 1,128 years of aircraft experience with Grumman." See "No Wonder Grumman has the Know How!" *Grumman Plane News* 7, no 9 (May 12, 1948): 1.

[39] MH, 7/22/03.

This touches on one of the major themes explored in this dissertation – the question of loyalty as it operated in the workplace. Many of the workers for Sperry, Grumman, and Republic (though perhaps a little less so in the latter case) had a strong sense of attachment and loyalty to the company they worked for. As Hans alludes to here, part of what generated this loyalty was a sense of excitement about being involved in a new field. So as we see here, workers themselves were aware of and excited about being part the second wave of the Second Industrial Revolution. While Hans may not have used these precise labels, he was aware of being involved with an exciting new technological field that was attempting to push the limits of what people could do. The fact that this was occurring against the backdrop of the Great Depression would have made it all the more impressive for the participants. Not only were they part of a thriving technological enterprise, but they were doing this during a period when large sectors of the US economy floundered.[40]

The founders of Grumman practiced employee relations that were largely informal and paternalistic. Management at Sperry and Republic also adopted a paternalistic relationship with their workforces. However, as we shall see, employee relations at the latter two companies were much more formal, which also created important differences between them and GAEC. Significantly, the employees at Grumman were not displeased with this paternalism – indeed, they clearly viewed it as a

[40] And this sense of being part of a cutting-edge field continued after the war as well. For example, William Wait worked on the F-105 during his time at Republic. The F-105 was Republic's first jet airplane, and was part of the reason why Republic initially thrived in the post-war period. The F-105 was the Air Force's preferred supersonic airplane for much of the 1960s. Planning began in 1955 and production took place from 1958 to 1964. For much of this time Wait was working on test flights from Edwards Air Force Base in California. When I asked him about his experiences there, he said, "It was a very interesting time frame because, particularly at Edwards Air Force Base, was where everything in the aviation industry was happening. All the manufacturers had test groups out there conducting tests, and you knew what everybody else was doing." WW, 4/15/05.

positive thing. For example, at one point O'Regan explicitly commented, "Grumman was a nice company to work for. They were very paternalistic."[41] Further elaborating on how this translated into the specifics of employee relations, she continued, "And if you had a gripe they usually did what they could to change it. To meet this." Clearly, O'Regan did not use the word "paternalistic" in a pejorative sense, something that challenges the conventional use of the term by many labor historians. Rather than simply viewing the way that welfare capitalism and its attendant paternalism influenced workers as an example of false consciousness, O'Regan's words challenge us, particularly labor historians, to reexamine the issue of paternalism and agency.[42]

In conclusion, workers at Sperry, Republic, and Grumman showed a great deal of loyalty to their employers prior to WW II for a variety of reasons. The first factor was a sense of gratitude because of steady employment during the Depression. The second was a sense of excitement and camaraderie generated by the connection to a new and innovative technological field. Many of these workers also felt loyal because the companies consciously sought to instill (and, indeed, employees liked) a sense of paternalism in the workforce. Large personnel departments facilitated this paternalistic

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[41] KO, 7/10/03.

[42] Other scholars such as Philip Scranton, Steven Peter Vallas, and Andrea Tone do recognize that "paternalism" has changed over time, and that we must be precise in contextualizing what the term means. See Philip Scranton, "Varieties of Paternalism: Industrial Structures and the Social Relations of Production in American Textiles," *American Quarterly* 36 (Summer 1984): 235-57; Steven Peter Vallas, *Power in the Workplace: The Politics of Production at AT&T* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); and Andrea Tone, *The Business of Benevolence: Industrial Paternalism in Progressive America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). In keeping with this idea that paternalism has more than one meaning, I should clarify what I mean by "paternalism." As we have already seen in this chapter and shall see again in subsequent chapters, paternalism as practiced by these employers and understood by these employees entailed responsiveness, responsibility, and affection, which is the word O'Regan herself uses below. In concrete form, these qualities resulted in practices such as steady employment, conflict resolution, fringe benefits such as paid vacations and health insurance, and support for leisure activities such as sports and hobby clubs. The result of these provisions was a sense of employee deference that varied from company to company. For example, Republic's management seemed to have a high expectation of deference, bordering on

relationship, which fit within the larger context of Welfare Capitalism that emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. But while workers at Republic and Sperry ultimately organized into unions, Grummanites doggedly rejected unionization.

Ethnicity and Race prior to WW II

The previous sections have examined some of the factors that shaped identity formation and influenced employee loyalty prior to WW II, such as the Great Depression and welfare capitalism. Ethnicity and race also played important roles in the workplaces under examination here, and Long Island more generally, prior to WW II. Many of the workers at all three companies, and Grumman and Republic in particular, were Italian-American. Other ethnic and racial groups were present in smaller numbers, such as Germans, German-Americans, Irish, Irish-Americans, African-Americans, and Jews. The large Italian presence in the workforce reflected the overall demographic make-up of Long Island, which received massive infusions of Italians after the turn of the twentieth century.[43] These workforces were almost exclusively white, which also reflected specific policies and practices put into effect prior to WW II in order to dramatically limit the migration of African-Americans and other groups to Long Island. However, as we shall

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entitlement, which backfired on them more than once. In contrast, Grumman's management enjoyed a great degree of employee deference, which resulted in multiple thwarted unionization drives.

[43] The work of Salvatore J. LaGumina is indispensable in documenting the arrival of Italians to Long Island. LaGumina observes that Italians encountered less discrimination in Long Island than their counterparts in New York City. Part of this stemmed from the fact that Italians on Long Island formed a greater percentage of the total population than Italians in the five boroughs. "As early as 1915 Westbury Italian immigrants and their issue comprised approximately one of every six residents, while this same ratio was not achieved in the cities until a generation later." Salvatore J. LaGumina, *From Steerage to Suburb: Long Island Italians* (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1988), 7.

see, there still were limited numbers of African-Americans working and living on Long Island. In all, ethnicity and race contributed significantly to the identity formation of these workers prior to WW II. In particular, ethnicity reinforced well-defined gender roles in the workplace. On some level, ethnicity, class, gender, and race were all mutually constitutive in the formation of work place culture at all three companies, and particularly Grumman.

As O'Regan's quote in the previous section alluded, Grumman managed hiring and employee relations informally prior to the explosive growth of World War II. Part of the reason for this was that kinship or other community-based relations often linked the employees directly to one another. For example, Grumman chronicler Richard Thruelsen presents the following hypothetical exchange between Jake Swirbul (one of the original partners that founded the company) and "Louis," an Italian-American welder, as typical of the way hiring decisions were made:

> Louis: Jake, I think maybe we're going to need another welder – to get this work out.
> Jake: Okay, Louie, if you're sure. Got anybody in mind?
> Louis: Yeah, my brother Joe. He's been working at Curtiss [Wright, another airplane manufacturer in Nassau County]. He's a good mechanic. Hardworking guy. They're layin' off there.
> Jake: Well, have him come in and see me.
> Louis: Sure, Jake. He'll be in tomorrow morning.[44]

As Thruelsen notes, the significance of this exchange actually goes unstated. Swirbul could be reasonably sure he was getting a good, reliable welder, "for the Italians were known for their skills in welding and working the ferrous metals."[45] In turn, Louie was

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[44] Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 54.
[45] Ibid. This is Thruelsen's assessment, and his source for this assertion is unclear. The research for his work relies heavily on access to company records as well as interviews with historical actors. Beyond this,

able to assist someone he was related to – a kinsman, friend, or acquaintance – find work in a desirable company. This style of informal, familial growth was typical of Grumman prior to World War II and facilitated easy employee relations.

The Italian-American presence in the workforce and the population of Long Island more generally had a distinct impact on racial discourse.[46] A number of scholars have examined the phenomenon of Italian American ethnicity and race. In particular, some fascinating work has been produced exploring the way Italian Americans came to embrace a "white" identity, and how this affected their relationship to people of color.[47] Thomas A. Guglielmo writes about the racial discourse that Italian immigrants navigated around the turn of the twentieth century. The color line in the US was very clear between "whites" and "colored races," which included groups ranging from "Negroes" to "Orientals" to "Mexicans." As Guglielmo observes, from the moment Italians first arrived in the US, they were considered white. "If Italians were racially undesirable in

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I would not want to speculate too much about Thruelsen's source, though as we shall see below, I encountered such generalizations about ethnicity and work proclivities in oral histories as well.

[46] This is a tricky distinction to make – not every scholar agrees on what constitutes "ethnicity" versus "race," or how to separate the two. Some suggest that ethnicity refers to a constellation of cultural traits such as language and religion, while the determination of race is based on physical traits, even if these traits are subjectively selected. Others argue that membership in an ethnic group is voluntary, whereas race is not. Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage, 1997), 81, 74-75, as cited in Thomas A. Guglielmo, "'No Color Barrier': Italians, Race, and Power in the United States," in Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, Ed., *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 29-43, 32. In the essay cited here, Thomas A. Guglielmo argues that the appropriate distinction to make is actually between race and color, where color refers to a social category rather than a physical description. I find this framework very useful for discussing Italian American identity, and so have borrowed it from Guglielmo in the discussion that follows.

[47] An excellent collection of thoughtful and engaging work can be found in Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, Ed., *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See particularly Jennifer Guglielmo's introductory essay, which provides an overview of the most important work in the field.

the eyes of many Americans, they were white just the same."[48] This dramatically affected the way that Italian Americans related to people of color.

Another one of the important ways that Italian American ethnicity impacted the lives of workers at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry was by influencing gender roles for both men and women. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Italian culture featured very strong gender roles for "mamas" and "papas." In some ways, these strict gender roles followed the traditional "separate spheres" model in the U.S. Or, as one history of Italian immigration summarizes, "The mamas ruled and managed the family units and the papas acted as foreign ministers and breadwinners."[49] The central role that women played in Italian families, particularly working-class families, was so demanding that they often ended up living "lives of self-sacrifice and total commitment to their families." However, this culture of self-sacrifice and total commitment also changed over the course of the twentieth century as Italians came into contact with US culture, which emphasized greater independence and self-fulfillment for women.[50] Consequently, the gender roles of Italian American men and women changed in the years

[48] Guglielmo, "No Color Barrier," 30. This quote hints at how complex racial discourse about identity was at the time. According to naturalization officials, Italian immigrants "color" was "white," their "complexion" was "dark," and their "race" was "Italian."

[49] A. Kenneth Ciongoli and Jay Parini, *Passage to Liberty: The Story of Italian Immigration and the Rebirth of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 16.

[50] A great deal of the secondary literature that examines Italian American ethnicity (and ethnicity in the US more generally) revolves around or at least refers to the question of immigration and assimilation. In other words, scholars have shown keen interest in the question of what Italian ethnicity was like before immigrants came to the US and what happened to it after they arrived. An earlier generation of social scientists argued in favor of "straight-line" theory, which suggested that Italian Americans gradually assimilated to mainstream American values over time. An example of this essentially Dukheimian formulation can be found in C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). A later generation of scholars revisited the question of how immigrants adjusted to life in the US and reached a different set of answers. For example, Donald Tricarico argued that Italian Americans maintained specific ethnic traits such as an emphasis on family, which was central to Italian American ethnic identity and was viewed as an "antidote to modern anomie." Donald Tricarico, "In a New Light: Italian-American Ethnicity in the Mainstream," in Peter Kivisto, ed., *The Ethnic Enigma: The Salience of Ethnicity for European-Origin Groups* (London: Associated University Presses, 1989): 24-46, 28.

leading up to World War II.[51] Women still found themselves in inferior social and economic roles, but they were not expected to be as self-sacrificing as at the turn of the century.

To this point, we have examined who the workers at all three companies were and what shaped the way they thought about themselves. Prior to WW II, most of the employees for Sperry, GAEC, and RAC were white, working-class men. These workplaces became sites for reinforcing white, working-class masculinity, a particularly important cultural project in the context of the 1930s, when economic pressure from the Great Depression upset the traditional role of breadwinner for many men. These large employers (as all three were prior to the war) offered steady employment in a setting that reinforced traditional notions of white, working-class masculinity. This was particularly important for some of the Italian American workers, since their racial status was less secure. In turn, these workers rewarded their employers with loyalty. The setting of Long Island is crucial to understanding the development and significance of these corporations – large tracts of undeveloped land and ready access to cheap yet skilled labor proved powerful assets for these fledgling companies. In turn, the success of Sperry, Grumman, and Republic during and after WW II fueled many of the later developments we typically associate with the post-war period – suburbanization, increased consumption, and the expansion of the military-industrial complex. But first,

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[51] This transition is examined wonderfully in Miriam Cohen, *Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). In brief, Italian families altered their behavior, keeping daughters in school longer, in response to changing economic and social conditions. In the early twentieth century, families kept daughters at home because they believed that the important skills the daughters needed for work or marriage could be learned at home. However, by the middle of the century, Italian families were keeping their daughters in school because of the increasing availability of white-collar jobs, as well as increasing enforcement of labor and school laws. Or, as Cohen summarizes, "When schooling was of little value to this working-class community, parents kept the

WW II threatened to ruin harmonious labor relations and homogeneous gender identities at all three companies.

World War II and the Changing Workplace

In July 1944, the *Grumman Plane News*, the company newspaper of the GAEC, lauded welder Cecelia Murphy as the "Woman of the Week." Previously a homemaker, Murphy was recruited into the booming war industry. The entrance of thousands of women into high paying, skilled and semi-skilled industrial jobs challenged popular assumptions that women belonged in the home, while men belonged in the workplace. Murphy's story helps to humanize the sweeping changes that overtook the lives of men and women living in the US during World War II. Examining the way that the editors of the *Grumman Plane News* framed Murphy's story also highlights the manner in which cultural assumptions about masculinity and femininity, as well as the appropriate roles for men and women, shaped the way that these workers thought about themselves and each other.

Prior to World War II, Murphy's life embodied the role that married women were expected to fulfill despite the economic pressure of the Great Depression. She was a homemaker who "like millions of other women in the United States devoted her every-day life to planning meals, keeping house, and making her home a happy one for her husband and son."[52] Over the course of the 1930s, however, despite social and cultural resistance from business and political leaders, many married women entered the workforce.

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children away; when schooling became essential for training girls to meet the needs of a changing job market, they were sent to school." (170)

[52] "Woman of the Week: She's the First Woman to Enter Syosset Tank Dept." *Grumman Plane News* 3, no. 28 (July 13, 1944): 4.

With the escalated production demands of WW II, housewives like Murphy were recruited into industries such as airplane manufacturing, which had previously relied almost exclusively on male employees but were suddenly desperate for new workers. Murphy was not greeted with open arms as she entered the GAEC workspace, which had previously been a bastion of male employees. Even though she had been well trained for welding, she was not prepared to deal with the situation that confronted her. Murphy was the first woman to work in her department, "and her future looked none too bright." In response to the entrance of women like Murphy onto the shop floor, male employees often harassed female workers, sometimes jokingly, other times cruelly. Murphy was likely subjected to the latter variety, as indicated by her admission, "I was never so scared in my life, and I wasn't there any time at all when I burst out crying." The editors of the *Plane News* did not entirely believe Murphy's tears were genuine, reporting, "This purely feminine act, as usual, gained results and from then on Cele and the boys have gotten along 'just swell.'" Intriguingly, the editors pointed toward the performative aspect of gender roles that played such an important part for the workers at these companies. To be sure, if Murphy was subjected to the forms of harassment examined in subsequent chapters in this dissertation, her tears were doubtless genuine. However, in doing so she was also performing gender, using normative cultural male values such as chivalrousness and respectability to flip the script, so to speak, on the male employees who were harassing her for intruding on their male space and possibly challenging their masculine identities.

Murphy's tears presented the male workers with a dilemma. Indeed, foreman Rudy Reissig recalled that it was "quite a problem to know what to do with a female

welder." Why was a female welder a problem? Perhaps she represented a threat to the economic status of these male welders … some women workers were still paid less at various times and places during the war. Certainly, her gender also mattered. Having a female employee threatened to disrupt the rough, masculine culture that permeated Grumman prior to the war. After a great deal of consideration, Reissig turned Murphy over to one of the young male employees with the instructions to "show her the ropes." The results were very positive: Murphy learned rapidly, became a good welder with "an excellent attendance record," and got along with everyone, even earning the nickname "Murph" from her coworkers. How did her male coworkers reconcile the perceived challenge of "Murph" to their white, masculine identities? Perhaps treating her with deference actually reinforced their masculinity in a different way than harassing her had – as respectable, rather than rough. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that, in fact, the men around her no longer perceived her as a threat to their masculinity. Her nickname "Murph" and the emphasis placed on the fact that she was a huge baseball fan suggests she was, on some level, initiated into the world of rough masculinity and adopted as "one of the boys."[53]

Other indications also support the latter explanation. George Skurla opens a memoir about his career at Grumman by relating the following story about his first experiences working on the shop floor when he started in March 1944:

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53 I am reminded here of Steve Meyer, "Rough Manhood: The Aggressive and Confrontational Shop Culture of U.S. Auto Workers during World War II," *Journal of Social History* v. 36 no. 1 (Fall 2002): 125-47. Meyer emphasizes fighting as an important element of rough working class male culture, and describes a number of fascinating examples. While I have found no record of fights on the shop floor of Grumman, the kind of rough masculine culture there quite likely would have included roughhousing of some sort. Recall, for example, the opening anecdote from this chapter, in which Joe Armstrong received a series of "clouts" from his coworkers for setting fire to a field outside the plant. Although Meyer does not include any interactions between men and women, any new worker (man or woman) doubtless would have found a setting like this intimidating, and would have taken steps to fit in.

> Sophie, my first lead supervisor … looked tough and she was – a no-nonsense lady. She assigned me to a couple of husky young women working the criss-cross press tables. I spent two sixty-hour work weeks being teased and bossed by them, learning how the plant worked and a lot more about what went on after hours. I was young enough to blush at their earthy jokes. Yet, after a few days, they more or less adopted me and we got along just fine.[54]

Skurla's anecdote suggests that Cecelia Murphy would have been in good company if she adopted the sort of rough masculinity that dominated Grumman's work culture.

Examining the story of Cecelia Murphy helps us to outline the broad contours of US economic, business, and labor history during WW II. In particular, her story helps us to situate the workforces of Grumman, Sperry, and Republic within these larger trends. Looking at these companies helps us to understand the impact that macro-level social changes had on identity formation for individual workers at large manufacturers. Economic changes challenged the way employees thought about themselves around the axes of gender, class, and race.

World War II had a major impact on the demographic profiles of the companies under consideration. The entrance of substantial numbers of women into the workforce was one of the other major changes to the workplace during WW II. This created significant challenges to traditional gender identities (both female and male). For example, the entrance of large numbers of women into the workforce threatened traditional masculine roles. The representations of women in these workplaces was complex and certainly challenged the notion that women should be homemakers or, at best, ancillary workers within the corporation. In all, the dramatic impact of WW II on the workplace posed a major challenge to traditional identity formation for the employees of these companies, undermining notions of gender, racial, and class identity.

Contrary to popular perceptions that WW II rescued a struggling industry, each of these businesses was a thriving concern prior to the war. They already had well-established relations with various branches of the military, and each company was growing at a rapid rate prior to US entry. That said, the entrance of the US into WW II created exponential growth for these manufacturers. Previously, the workforce had been almost exclusively male and labor relations had been largely informal and paternalistic. WW II had a substantive impact on the workforce – both in terms of its composition, and in terms of labor relations (including unionization).

The aircraft and other products of all three companies played pivotal roles in WW II.[55] Production for each firm expanded exponentially during the war years. For example, by the end of the war Grumman alone had produced 1,820 F4F Wildcats, 2,291 TBF-1 Avengers, and 12,272 F6F Hellcats.[56] For its part, Republic produced almost 10,000 P-47s during the same period.[57] Obviously, this enormous increase in production necessitated a similar growth in the workforce to meet the new demands.

Grumman's ability to produce such an incredible number of planes during WW II hinged on an exponential expansion in both their facilities and personnel. When the US entered the war, GAEC had a workforce of 6,500. For the next six months, Grumman increased its plant force by roughly 1,000 people per month. After that, the company continued to hire between 1,000 and 2,000 new employees per month until reaching a

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[54] Skurla and Gregory, *Inside the Iron Works*, 4-5.
[55] Grumman aircraft in particular played a pivotal role in WW II. The planes that made Grumman a household name during the 1940s were the F4F Wildcat, the TBF-1 Avenger, and the F6F Hellcat. Indeed, Grumman's reputation for building reliable, rugged aircraft led Vice-Admiral John S. McCain to famously comment during WW II, "The name Grumman on a plane or a part, has the same meaning to the Navy that 'Sterling' has on silver." Quoted in Treadwell, *Ironworks*, 13.
[56] These figures are taken from Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 380-2.

peak of 25,527 employees in September 1943.[58] Grumman was hardly unique in this respect – many manufacturers experienced similar expansion during the war years. Republic's workforce increased from 10,000 in 1940 to 24,450 by 1944.[59] Sperry underwent dramatic changes as well. The workforce increased ten fold, to a wartime peak of more than 32,000 in 1943.[60] By 1942, Sperry had outgrown its original site in Brooklyn and relocated to a new facility in Lake Success, NY. Paid for by the federal government, this new production site set the stage for Sperry to become one of Long Island's largest employers following the war. Perhaps most remarkable, the increase in personnel occurred despite the fact that male workers were leaving in droves to join the armed forces.[61]

The exponential increase in the size of the workforce was bound to have an impact on labor relations. Indeed, waves of labor unrest occurred throughout the U.S. during the war. As discussed above, Grumman relied on informal labor relations prior to the war, both for hiring and for managing within the workplace. During the war, this had to change because it was simply impossible to hire tens of thousands of people through informal networks of personal acquaintance or kinship.[62]

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[57] The P-47 was the main Air Corps fighter plane in the European theater. These planes brought down more than 4,000 enemy planes and 9,000 locomotives. Joshua Stoff, *The Aerospace Heritage of Long Island* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1989), 53.

[58] Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 141.

[59] Joshua Stoff, "Grumman Versus Republic: Success and Failure in the Aviation Industry on Long Island," *Long Island Historical Journal* 1, no. 2, 114.

[60] Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 53, folder 16, "Census of Personnel, 1944-54," and Preston Bassett, "Sperry's Forty Years in Progress of Science," *Sperryscope* 12, no. 2, 21.

[61] As Grumman reported in January 1943, more than 1,800 employees left for service in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps following the attack on Pearl Harbor. See "Grumman Aircraft Corp. Plans to Triple Plane Output in 1943," *New York Times* Jan 15, 1943: 11.

[62] Despite this, Grumman maintained a paternalistic relationship with employees and managed to avert unionization attempts. On the other hand, workers at Sperry organized during the war and Republic followed suit a few years after the war's end. The next section will examine the unionization efforts at all three companies more closely.

Faced with increased production demands and a shortage of traditional workers, Grumman, Republic, and Sperry made the same reluctant decision that many other manufacturers of the period did and turned to nontraditional workers. This was also one of the very dramatic changes within the workplace during the war – the entrance of women in massive numbers to what had been almost exclusively male workspaces. Of particular interest was the way in which these changes upended traditional gender roles.

The first women to work on the shop floor at Grumman started in March 1942. Beginning with the modest number of six, the GAEC eventually hired approximately 8,000 women, or roughly 30 percent of the workforce at the height of wartime employment.[63] These women were generally inexperienced in manufacturing positions, and some employers were initially reluctant to hire them. Government agencies such as the Department of Labor created special groups to encourage manufacturers to employ women. In particular, the Women's Bureau issued a series of twenty Special Bulletins during the course of the war. These covered topics ranging from Special Bulletin no. 4 (1942), "Washing and Toilet Facilities for Women in Industry," to Special Bulletin no. 10 (1943), "Women's Effective War Work Requires Good Posture."[64]

Catherine ("Kay") O'Regan's story illustrates some of these themes quite nicely. She started working for Grumman on May 14, 1942. As O'Regan discussed the

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[63] Grumman statistics found in comparative employment statistics for 1942, 1943, and 1944, Grumman History Center, as cited in Christine Kleinegger, "The Janes Who Made the Planes: Grumman in World War II," *Long Island Historical Journal* 12, no. 1: 1-10. These figures are consistent with the rest of the workforce. By July 1944, the total number of women in the civilian labor force was 20,430,000, or 36.1 percent of all workers. By way of comparison, in August 1940 that number stood at just 14,740,000, or 25.6 percent of all workers. *Women as Workers (A Statistical Guide)*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (September 1950), 5.

[64] Special Bulletin no 4 of the Women's Bureau, "Washing and Toilet Facilities for Women in Industry," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), and Margaret T. Mettert, Special Bulletin no. 10 of the Women's Bureau, "Women's Effective War Work Requires Good Posture," (Washington, DC:

longevity of the depression and the rejuvenating impact of World War II on the employment situation during her oral history, she observed, "And then when the war started, the war industry started, and they would take anybody. Grumman was hiring a thousand people a month." This was when O'Regan started working in the war industry. First she registered with the New York State employment agency, which had jointly opened a school with Grumman to train new workers. They asked if she had experience with machines. The only machine she had at the time was a sewing machine. So O'Regan went to school for three weeks and then started working at Grumman.[65]

In this respect, O'Regan's experience is representative. Many young women were laboring in traditionally female (and traditionally low-paying) occupations prior to the war. The war provided opportunities for thousands of women to break into the ranks of higher paying semi-skilled and skilled laborers.[66] However, the presence of women in typically male workspaces also generated a complex set of responses.

U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943). In addition to practical topics such as these, the Special Bulletins also addressed broader issues such as housing for women workers and the transition from war to peace.

[65] KO, 7/10/03. It is telling that three weeks was considered enough time to train for work on the assembly line. Evidently this work was more semi-skilled or even unskilled than some employers were willing to admit. This was a common theme in the workplace culture of these companies – workers were still praised as craftsmen, even as the workplace itself was increasingly automated and mechanized. However, in fairness, the assembly lines of manufacturers like GAEC seemed to lag behind the level of mechanization found in, say, automobile assembly plants. In fact, this created problems during WW II. General Motors negotiated with the Navy and War Production Board to manufacture F4F-4 Wildcats and TBF Avengers. GM created a new division, Eastern Aircraft, to produce and assemble the planes. Problems set in from the start, as GM management and engineers found they could not simply apply the mass-production methods of car manufacturing to planes. See Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 155-57.

[66] These were not the first women hired by Grumman for other responsibilities, however. According to Richard Thruelsen, the first female employee, Anne Maher, was hired in 1932 as "front-office secretary, typist, invoicer, and maid-of-all-work." Maher had previously worked for the Loening Company, and so she presumably knew somebody from her experience there. Thruelsen also observed, "Miss Maher was to become the doyenne of the Grumman office force and would work in an office adjacent to the Grumman-Swirbul enclave until her retirement twenty-nine years later." Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 62.

Women and Men, Femininity and Masculinity

The introduction of unprecedented numbers of women and African Americans to industries involved in war work triggered a series of complex changes for both employers and employees. In addition to creating new economic relationships between various social groups, traditional gender roles for men and women were complicated as a result. At a time when beauty pageants and other objectifying forums gained broad, national popularity, government agencies and some large employers presented women in the industrial workplace in less demeaning forms. Sperry went so far as to lionize women workers for embodying important values such as workplace safety or patriotism, regardless of physical appearance. In fact, the topic of workplace safety, disproportionately directed at women in explicitly gendered ways, became a dominant theme in company publications during WW II. Employers like Grumman also cautioned men about the hazards of industrial accidents. On the other hand, Grumman was just as likely to chide male employees for not treating women in a traditional, chivalrous manner. In other words, the demographic changes of the war resulted in emphasis on a different type of masculinity. Rather than embodying "rough" manliness, male workers were encouraged to rely upon "respectable" masculinity in the workplace.

One of the dominant themes in company publications from the war years was a message directed at female employees concerning safety. For example, the *Sperry News* was full of messages relating the importance of wearing hairnets to keep hair from getting caught in machinery. In fact, photographs of actual employees with bald patches on their heads accompanied a number of these warnings. The images of these workers,

displaying blank spaces where machines ripped the hair from their scalps, were arresting. Other articles, which thankfully did not include photographs, related reports of people having their scalps actually ripped off. A few of the images were of men, but the majority depicted women, the true target audience. Figure 1.1 features one such cartoon about women getting their hair stuck in machinery. The accompanying article cautions, "A woman can't be a Veronica Lake at the machines."[67] The editors urged women in the plant to wear the hairnets that supervisors provided to them.[68]

Figure 1.1 "Losing Your Head, Veronica?"

Management at Sperry grew particularly concerned with the problem of workplace accidents – especially the difficulty of a female employee's long hair getting caught in machinery. In response, by August 1942 the company replaced hairnets for women with caps. Figure 1.2 reproduces the accompanying image from an article in

[67] "Speaking of Safety" and "Losing Your Head, Veronica?" *Sperry News* 1, no. 4 (March 1, 1942): 7.

Sperry's company newspaper that announced the switch from hairnets to caps. Apparently, the hairnets still allowed for accidents.[69] Compounding the problem was the fact that many women found the nets unattractive and resisted wearing them.

Figure 1.2 "Shop Cap Worn Carefully is Safe"

In response, in April 1943 the company announced a formal dress code for women working in shop settings. The article cheerfully announced, "Beginning tomorrow the old worry, 'What shall I wear to work today,' will be gone with the wind for Sperry shop girls."[70] Figure 1.3 shows the accompanying photograph of the new uniform – a basic pair of coveralls and a Legion style cap. The article, playing on presumed female fears about fashionableness, reassured the reader, "After months of research, the General Health and Safety Department with the help of committees of shop girls have created a striking combination called the 'Industri-all.'"

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[68] Interestingly, in Grumman's company newspaper, the space that Sperry used for safety announcements was often used for a variety of ribald jokes, some of which will be examined in subsequent chapters.
[69] "Shop Cap Worn Carefully is Safe," *Sperry News* 1, no. 9 (August 1, 1942): 5. This article notes that many of the hairnets were "too loose to be effective," but that even with the replacement shop cap "loose strands of hair are still being caught in bench rotors." Sperry was hardly alone in this regard – industrial accidents were a national concern during this period. Concerned with possible slowdowns in production, the government launched a massive awareness and prevention campaign.
[70] "Sperry Women to Have Attractive Safety Togs," *Sperry News* 2, no. 10 (April 15, 1943): 1.

Figure 1.3 “Sperry Women to Have Attractive Safety Togs”

This episode points to one of the tensions created by the entrance of women into these manufacturing work sites: fashion versus safety equipment. The debate had to do with worker control and autonomy, but also related to standards of femininity, which in turn reflected gender, race, and class signifiers. During the war, fashion functioned as a powerful sign of social status. For women, wearing a skirt in public was a sign of social position. Or, as Catherine O’Regan put it, “Women didn’t wear pants. Ladies wore skirts. You would never appear in pants on the street.”[71] O’Regan was not the only woman that felt this way. Uncomfortable appearing publicly in slacks, which was traditionally male garb, many women resisted the idea of wearing uniforms or other types of clothing that required them to go out publicly in pants.

Former Republic employee Mary Bloom provides further evidence of the strong (indeed, almost emotional) impact that women evoked when appearing publicly in slacks.

[71] KO, 7/10/03. The topic of skirts and status will be revisited more substantially in the next chapter because evidence suggests that the link between fashion and femininity was actually one of the continuities between the war years and the post-war period.

At the time of her oral history, Bloom was 75 years old. She worked for Republic from 1952 to 1987, starting as a clerk and working her way up to executive secretary. Referring to her memories from World War II, she described the following experience:

> When I was a child, in Rockville Center, I used to watch, I guess I was about twelve when the war broke out, and this neighbor ... girl, well she was older than me, I used to see her standing on the corner waiting to be picked up. You know they carpooled. And I would say, "Well, she's going to work in slacks?" You know as a kid I thought, [gasps], because what I knew about it was you got all dressed up, but she wore slacks. Little did I know.[72]

The sight of women going to work made strong impressions on many observers during the period, including Bloom. Importantly, Bloom also points to the underlying class assumptions in operation here. Respectable, middle class women did not wear pants, they got "all dressed up" in skirts.

The amount of work that companies like Sperry put into trying to get women workers to abide by safety requirements such as coveralls and hairnets suggests that compliance was an issue. Sperry's management addressed this by attempting to assuage concerns that the clothing requirements were costly, unflattering, and anything but trendy. When the popular fashion magazine *Vogue* ran a brief article on the company uniform in November 1943, Sperry took the opportunity to highlight the fashion worthiness of the attire in its own company newspaper. The article enthused, "*Vogue* liked the uniform so much they carried a double-page spread in the November issue showing a Sperry girl in uniform ready for on-the-job action."[73] This announcement was

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[72] MB, 3/20/05. The final line, "Little did I know," points to one of the fascinating aspects of working with oral history. Here, Bloom's memory, indeed, the very focus and narrative of her story, is itself the product of a later time. The recollection about a woman going to work in slacks during WWII is framed in reference to the developments of the 1960s and 1970s.

[73] "Neat as a P-38," *Sperry News* 2, no. 23 (November 1, 1943): 12.

specifically targeted to women readers (it appeared under the regular "It's a Working Woman's World" column), and was intended to encourage them to make use of the recently opened company PX (Plant Exchange), a small shop where employees could purchase all of the clothing materials that they were expected to wear.

The article suggests that women resisted wearing uniforms for a variety of reasons, including concerns about style and cost. Attempting to sell women on the fashionable qualities of pants, the writer advised, "You'll look neat in the Army tan or Cadet blue slacks that are tapered to fit to perfection."[74] These were not run-of-the-mill slacks, either, but "modern overalls designed especially for Sperry women." The announcement went on to suggest other advantages, too – neatness and simplicity, lower cleaning bills, and the perfect combination of colors to suit any taste. Finally, with a nod to safety concerns, the article added that Legion hats (the caps that replaced hairnets) were also available for $1.00. Grimly, female readers were informed, "The Legion hat is not only smart, it's important – important if you want to keep those curls on your head and not have 'em swept from the floor in a pool of blood." Despite all of the analysis of fashion and form that was intended to persuade women workers to wear coveralls and head coverings, the final argument concerning these measures was that they were necessary for safety. Significantly, we also see here that these workers had to buy their own safety clothing and equipment, which further explains why some workers continued to resist this particular policy.

Determined to make protective hair caps palatable, the *Sperry News* ran another article in March 1944 about a new, fashionable solution that was speeding through one of the plants. Figure 1.4 shows the "turban style" of headdress that offered a practical, yet

attractive solution to the problem of hair-related accidents.[75] Three models showed stylish variations of the "turban style" – the "Sultan's Favorite," "Egyptianelle," and "Scherrazzadde." These three styles featured tightly wrapped headdresses that presumably satisfied the dual needs of these workers to be both fashionable and safe. A fourth example illustrated what not to do by displaying a young woman who had left some portion of her hair exposed at the crown and top of her forehead. Helen Wolfe, the guilty party, reminded the reader, "You're supposed to keep it under your hat." The tension over head coverings and uniforms at Sperry illustrates the way that some women in these workplaces embraced traditional markers of femininity such as long hair and skirts. Rather than perceiving these traits as confining, some women defiantly kept them as status markers, as signifiers to other people and themselves of their identity and their place in the world.

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[74] "One of Several PXs Open Today," *Sperry News* 2, no. 23 (November 1, 1943): 10.
[75] "Turban style trend sweeps tube shop as women in white report for duty," *Sperry News* 3, no. 8 (March 15, 1944): 8.

Figure 1.4 "Turban Style Trend Sweeps Tube Shop"

Even as women resisted calls to keep their heads covered and employers struggled to find creative ways to encourage compliance, gendered messages about workplace safety played on gender stereotypes in an effort to depict women as vulnerable and unaware. For example, figure 1.5 is a cartoon from a November 1943 issue of the *Sperry News*. A man and a woman are in a shop setting having a conversation. The woman says, "Do you really think my hair is dangerous? Most men say it's my eyes!"[76] This cartoon is revealing for two reasons. First, there is the obvious commentary about the danger of long hair in a factory setting, which this particular fictitious woman is oblivious to. Second, the cartoon also playfully alludes to another one of the anxieties that women

[76] "Speaking of Safety…" *Sperry News* 2, no. 23 (November 1, 1943): 8.

entering the workplace in large numbers generated – sexual tension and temptation. As noted masculinities studies scholar Michael Kimmel has observed, this sort of commentary is not really about women as much as the reader might initially think. Rather, the real fear here is hypermasculinity. In other words, any setting where women have to be controlled (sometimes to the point of outright exclusion) indicates a real problem with or fear about men being unable to control themselves.[77] In other words, women were not the only (or necessarily even the primary) intended audience for these images. Some cartoons like this one really targeted men, as an insider's joke that would, presumably, help to alleviate the threat of women workers and reaffirm the masculinity of the male reader by instructing them to keep their "eye on the ball".

Figure 1.5 "Most Men Say It's My Eyes."

Other messages in these workplaces explicitly addressed women and played on traditional ideas about feminine sexuality and gender roles. Company announcements

[77] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 89-100. Kimmel notes that this concern with self-control and sex was often racialized as well. For example, African American men and immigrants were characterized as less manly than native born whites, yet paradoxically they were also feared to be sexually insatiable and overly

about safety issues sometimes adopted belittling notes that emphasized domesticity and marriage, two very traditional female traits. One of the more bizarre examples of this comes from the safety campaigns at Sperry. Figure 1.6 reproduces a notice that appeared in the *Sperry News* in September 1943.[78] The accompanying picture of a manicured hand holding a smoldering cigarette clearly belongs to a woman. Additionally, a diamond engagement ring appears prominently on the third finger, which indicates the point of the notice. The text describes a nameless bride who plans to get married next weekend while her fiancé is home on furlough. The reader learns, "She plans to be happy that day – very, very happy." The cautionary tale climaxes when we learn that the bride had an accident at work yesterday and injured "that third finger, left hand." Luckily, the injury was not serious, though it could have been. "Like so many of her coworkers she was careless for only a moment." The generalization about coworkers here was probably gender-specific, referring to female coworkers, though we cannot be certain. Male workers were also cautioned about avoiding industrial accidents in other contexts, but the gendered overtones of this announcement clearly imply that women workers were perceived or stereotyped to be careless. Significantly, there was no corresponding warning directing men to be careful around heavy machinery so that they did not lose that "third finger, left hand." The message for women was clear: working in the war industry was just a brief stop, a sightseer's detour on the way to traditional female roles such as marriage and child rearing. In this formulation, employers like Sperry did not caution women to avoid crippling accidents because it might affect their ability to continue

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potent. In other words, African American and immigrant men were not manly enough, yet simultaneously too manly.

[78] "Third Finger, Left Hand," *Sperry News* 2, no. 19 (September 1, 1943): 10.

working. Rather, they should not ruin their ring finger – then they would not be able to wear a wedding band and perform all of the duties that the ring conferred.

Figure 1.6 “Third finger, left hand”

One of the most fascinating aspects of the wartime culture in these workplaces was that even as traditional, gendered messages about women were in currency, other subversive, quasi-feminist events simultaneously reframed femininity. In some cases, these alternative forms also related to questions of workplace safety. In January 1944, Sperry announced a contest for “Safety’s Pin-Up Girl for 1944,” an intriguing episode, which, like the cartoon above, also reveals a great deal about the complex gender discourse of the war years.[79] This was not a company-wide contest; entry was limited to women “working on machines or exposed to machine hazards on the job.” In keeping with the ardent safety campaign, contestants had to “Write a 100-word essay on why you keep all your hair under your hat.” Despite the title of “Pin-Up Girl,” this was not a beauty contest, as underscored by the fact that contestants were not required to submit photographs with their essays. Rather, this competition was looking for an example, a representative of shared community values that did not include physical beauty. As we

shall see in a subsequent chapter, this contrasts sharply with post war contests for women at Sperry that freely focused on physical beauty.

The organizers announcement of the winner of the “Safety Pin-Up Girl for 1944” made the point about shared values, femininity, and beauty explicit. The winner was Alberta F. Raymond (figure 1.7). The editors of the paper observed, “By her own admission Mrs. Raymond is ‘no chicken,’ and she chuckled good-naturedly over her new title ‘safety pin-up girl for 1944.’”[80] The judges selected her essay in particular because Raymond explained succinctly that women must keep their hair under their hats because accidents, “aside from causing personal injury, delay war production.” The editors reprinted the winning entry in full, concluding with the line, “A woman without her crowning glory would be a sad sight, so let’s be wise, play safe – always keep it all under your hat.”

Figure 1.7 “Safety Pin-Up Girl for 1944”

This contest points to an intriguing aspect of the corporate culture at these workplaces during the war. Sperry in particular created a space for the representation of multiple femininities. Alberta F. Raymond did not necessarily meet the conventions of physical beauty of the day, but the company valued her expression of safety values so

[79] “A Contest!” *Sperry News* 3, no. 3 (January 1, 1944): 4

much that they held her up as an exemplary woman in the context of pressing wartime production demands. Perhaps Raymond was even more valued because her less "female" version of femininity helped ease tensions between male and female workers in the shop. Her winning essay emphasized the need for women to keep their long hair hidden, which functioned on two levels. In the most straightforward way, Raymond's message related to safety. Keeping hair tucked away was, after all, a practical and effective way of preventing very serious and gruesome workplace accidents. But on another level, the practice of hiding long hair also doubled as a means of encouraging women to suppress their femininity. Long hair was one physical marker of womanliness. Urging female employees to hide their hair also functioned to make them less visible *as women* in the workplace, which consequently assuaged the problems of hypermasculinity and male hostility toward women in the workplace. As we shall see in the following two chapters, representations of women became much more homogenous after the war, indicating an effort to sharply define separate gender roles and identities in the post-war order.

Other examples of multiple femininities emerged during the war years, too, and in workplaces other than Sperry. Some of these contests were actually part of larger, regional competitions that used companies such as Sperry to host "feeder" contests. In turn, the winners of the contest from Sperry would then be eligible to participate in a larger contest with winners from other companies. In October 1942, the *Sperry News* featured a front-page announcement encouraging women working in the shop to enter the "Miss Victory" contest. The announcement explained, "Thirteen Sperry shop women will be chosen next week to represent Sperry women in a city-wide war industry contest

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[80] "She Keeps It Under Her Hat," *Sperry News* 3, no. 5 (February 1, 1944): 14.

to select a MISS VICTORY for the metropolitan New York area."[81] The *New York Journal American*, owned by the Hearst Corporation, sponsored the competition, which featured a grand prize of a $1,000 war bond (awarded by "a committee of distinguished federal officials").

Significantly, however, the Miss Victory contest was not a competition in the sense of Miss America or other popular pageants. All Sperry women were eligible, regardless of whether they were married or single. The *Sperry News* insisted, "This is NOT a beauty contest, but a bona fide search for a typical war production plant worker whose attendance record, whose quality and quantity of work, whose civilian defense activities, whose sacrifices for the war effort, and similar qualifications make her eligible to typify a growing army of women who are giving this war effort their best." The judges did not expect these new women workers to be physically striking, per se, but they did need to embody certain characteristics and a certain kind of femininity. Contests such as Miss Victory were intended to demonstrate that women were valued, and at the same time, they also instructed women on appropriate, feminine values to embody. The emphasis was not always on beauty, but on other qualities such as personality, timeliness, good work habits, and selflessness. Another photo of the thirteen women who won Sperry's contest and were entered in the larger Miss Victory competition presents a range of facial features and body types.[82]

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[81] "Miss Victory Contest Begins Today; is Open to Sperry Shop Women," *Sperry News* 1, no. 13 (October 16, 1942): 1.

[82] "MISS VICTORY finalists selected to compete for $1,000 war bond and chance for national title," *Sperry News* 1, no. 15 (November 15, 1942): 3. Two of these contestants finished among the top 10 finalists for the second competition. Olive White was ranked third, while Mrs. Martha Vargas finished fifth. As a reward, both received watches from the company. "Two of the Miss Victory Contestants Finished in the Top 10," *Sperry News* 2, no. 1 (December 1, 1942): 1.

During the war, Sperry also reproduced photographs of female employees that had been selected for unconventional, non-company sponsored beauty competitions such as "Miss Subways," a contest that was promoted by the New York Subways Advertising company.[83] Women aged 14 to 30 sent their photos and brief biographies to John Robert Powers, a top modeling agent, who had the monthly winners photographed by noted photographers such as Victo Keppler.[84] According to Melanie Bush, the standard of beauty for this contest was "realistic." She elaborated, "Unlike Miss America, these queens represented the full spectrum of their constituency, mainly Irish, Italian, Latina and Jewish."[85] The *Sperry News* reprinted pictures of at least two employees that were named "Miss Subways" in 1942. Figure 1.8 is Stella Mikrut, who won "Miss Subways" and also posed for a national bond sales campaign by the US Treasury.[86]

[83] Melanie Bush, "Miss Subways, Subversive and Sublime," *New York Times* October 24, 2004 Section 14; Column 1; The City Weekly Desk; New York Observed; Pg. 3. The contest ran from 1941 to 1977, and was actually recently revived. Bush provides a brief history of the campaign and some fascinating ruminations about the complexity of the images and the significance they had for her as a "short, Jewish and nerdily bespectacled" 8 year old riding the D train in the 1970s. For Bush, these images were "covertly feminist," focusing on the ambitions of the women pictured, perhaps most radically so during WW II. The promoters themselves were not motivated by a desire to advance any sort of feminist project, however. As Bush reports: "Bernard Spaulding, who supervised the contest in its last 14 years, claimed that the contest was simply a ploy by Subways Advertising to 'increase the eye traffic for adjoining ads.'" Whether the contest was intentionally subversive or simply commercial, as one report about the 50th anniversary reunion of Miss Subways reported, it did have the power to turn "a Bronx secretary into an underground queen." "More than 50 Former 'Miss Subways' Attend 50th Anniversary Reunion," *United Press International*, May 13, 1991: 5.

[84] "Sperryite Promotes Bond Sales," *Sperry News* 1, no. 9 (August 1, 1942): 2.

[85] Bush, "Miss Subways," 3. The first African American Miss Subways was named in 1947, 36 years before an African American Miss America, and the first Asian woman won in 1949.

[86] "Sperryite Promotes Bond Sales," 2.

Figure 1.8 “Stella Mikrut”

Figure 1.9 reproduces the announcement of another employee, Rosemary Gregory, who was named “Miss Subways” for August 1942.[87] Although the ethnicity of these women is difficult to gauge, they are both white and do indeed appear to promote “realistic” standards of beauty. The example of the “Miss Subways” contest also illustrates that Sperry’s emphasis on multiple femininities was part of a broader cultural turn that occurred during the war years.

Figure 1.9 “Rosemary Gregory”

[87] *Sperry News* 1, no. 10 (August 14, 1942): 2.

Some women and men still experienced anxiety about the impact that the entrance of women would have on traditional gender roles.[88] Indeed, the question of employing women remained controversial throughout the war period. One Boeing official found himself in hot water after telling a group of correspondents in August 1942 that women workers were "frivolous."[89] New York-based employers were quick to distance themselves from this sentiment. The GAEC issued a statement that women workers were "very satisfactory," and Sperry noted that women were "adept at many tasks."[90]

Despite the official pronouncements certifying women as "satisfactory" or "adept," workers in these plants still experienced anxiety or resentment about women entering the workplace. Male coworkers were not always receptive to the presence of women, and sometimes subjected them to various forms of hazing. For example, male members of the recreational clubs like the bowling league routinely snubbed female members. In some instances, this behavior was extreme enough to draw reprimands through the company's newspaper. In February 1944 the *Sperry News* ran an article asking male workers to "Be Kind to the Nice Ladies, Please."[91] The picture that accompanied this article featured four dejected looking women with bowling balls. This team was at the bottom of the league standings. The article concludes, "It's just not

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[88] For example, see Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body At War: American Masculinity during World War II* (Dekalb: University of Northern Illinois Press, 2004).

[89] "Aircraft Factories in East Deny Women Workers are Frivolous," *New York Times* Aug 20, 1942: 24. As Sherna Berger Gluck explains, the word "frivolous" here was a sort of code, referring to women who were too careless with their newfound income. See Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 15.

[90] "Sperry has found women adept at many tasks in different divisions," *Sperry News* 1, No. 4 (March 1, 1942): 4. This article notes that, among other things, approximately five percent of the personnel in the manufacturing division were women. "Among major tasks assigned to them are repetitive operations on many sub-assemblies"

[91] "Be Kind to the Nice Ladies, Please," *Sperry News* 3, no. 6 (February 15, 1944): 7.

gentlemanly to treat the only girls' team in the league that way." Significantly, the newspaper editors based this appeal to the male bowlers on gender, specifically asking them to embrace respectable masculine behavior, rather than rough masculine behavior.

Evidently the appeals for more gentlemanly treatment of female employees fell on deaf ears, as demonstrated by the bowling showdown that occurred between two teams named "Us Men" and "We 'Goils" just one month later.[92] The article noted that in this particular battle of the sexes, "Us Men" carried the day. Evidently, these men chose to ignore calls to embrace respectable masculinity.

This kind of behavior was not limited to recreational leagues, either. Once again, the oral history of Catherine O'Regan provides us with insight into the experiences of women during the war. During and immediately following World War II, O'Regan worked on the shop floor in the Hydraulics Department.[93] She spent hours applying identifying decals to the interior parts of planes, an experience she described as "monotonous."[94] However, upon further reflection, she offered a more textured account of her working environment in the tumultuous war years:

> KO: Umm, they gave the gals a hard time.
> SP: How so?

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[92] "'Us Men' Win Battle of Sexes," *Sperry News* 3, no. 8 (March 15, 1944): 11.

[93] After about five years, O'Regan managed to move into the Tool Engineering department. She eventually got a job there doing drafting. Prior to going to work for Grumman, O'Regan had a high school education. She took some college courses as well, but most of her training at Grumman came on the job or through special educational programs the company organized.

[94] The interior of a plane has a large number of pipes (referred to as "lines") that transport hydraulic fluid. O'Regan's job consisted of labeling these lines with decals and then covering the decals with masking tape. The masking tape was there to protect the decals while the interior of the aircraft was painted at a later stage. Once the aircraft was painted, another worker simply pulled the masking tape up, and the identifying decal would still be visible. O'Regan and her coworkers spent long hours applying these decals – ten hours on Monday through Friday and eight hours on Saturday. The job was not particularly skilled, which added to the monotony. In fact, each of the women in this unit had a set of tools they had brought with them to the job. In O'Regan's words, "Most of us never used them again, except to loan out tools." Catherine O'Regan, "My work at Grumman: 1942-47," personal memoir, in possession of author.

> KO: The men weren't used to having women working with them. They were all blue-collar workers. Understandably so. Archie Bunker. Heart of gold. Wonderful. But just don't upset the apple cart. They didn't like having women there because if we were successful they'd all have to go to war. And guess what? We were successful and they did go to war…
> SP: So when you say that the men would give you a hard time, that would consist of what? Joking...?
> KO: Well, that, but also, as you can imagine there were very few women's restrooms when we started. They converted some of the men's rooms to women's rooms, but there were few of them. So you had a long distance to walk, and we usually went in pairs, because as you walk through from one department to the other, everyone would start hammering anything. So this was ... tremendous noise as you walk through. And this is not pleasant. It's kind of embarrassing. Every time you went to the john there was this big noise accompanying you, and it went in waves as you went through.
> SP: Was that why they did it, was it meant to embarrass you?
> KO: No, it was just, look up, there's females walking through. They weren't used to seeing females.
> SP: So it was like an early version of the catcall.
> KO: I guess. Yeah.[95]

There is good evidence to suggest that this kind of behavior or interaction continued well into the post war years, and that other women found it quite traumatizing. Since this kind of behavior continued and in some ways even intensified after the war, the next chapter offers a more detailed discussion on the subject of male and female interactions in the workplace.

In conclusion, men and women found traditional gender roles challenged substantially during the war years. In particular, femininity was reframed in subversive ways as women were suddenly permitted to appear as motivated and capable individuals in some contexts. In other contexts, however, traditional notions of dependence continued to linger. In addition, proponents of respectable masculinity began to criticize the tough form of manliness that had dominated these workplaces prior to the war. The

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[95] Again, we see an example here of how memories are shaped by subsequent experiences. O'Regan fondly remembered some of her former coworkers from the 1940s by comparing them to Archie Bunker, a fictional television character from the 1970s.

next section explores the role that race and ethnicity played in this mix, paying particular attention to the question of labor unions at these companies.

Unions, Ethnicity, and Race during WW II

The final section of this chapter looks at the question of union organizing at Grumman, Sperry, and Republic during the war. Although the labor movement experienced dramatic national gains during this period, organization drives at Republic and Grumman failed during the war years.[96] Workers at Sperry joined the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) in 1942. A number of reasons influenced the decisions of workers with regard to union organizing. Without doubt, the anti-union campaigns at Grumman and Republic help to explain why employees rejected unionization. In addition, other factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender further complicated matters. For example, conflicts emerged between union leadership and management over questions of race and hiring. In some instances, these factors actually helped union organizers, but in others, they hindered the attempts of the UE and IAM to organize employees.

Organized labor grew dramatically in size and influence during the 1930s and 1940s. With the help of measures such as the National Labor Relations Act in 1935 (commonly known as the Wagner Act) unions were able to organize new workers in mass-production industries such as rubber and electrical equipment. This led to the

eventual rift between the AFL and CIO. In addition to recruiting new workers, labor was able to negotiate tougher contracts in combative industries such as steel, coal, and automobile manufacturing. Thanks to efforts like these, union membership went from 2.3% of the US workforce in 1930 to 27.6% in 1940.[97] Union membership continued to expand dramatically during World War II.[98] These broad national developments also impacted the workplaces of the companies under study, particularly Sperry and Republic.

As discussed earlier, the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers of America, a company union, ostensibly represented the employees at Sperry at the start of WW II. Questions about the independence of this organization remained, however. While the company union appeared to function as a form of employee representation, the strain of wartime changes proved to be its undoing. When employees threatened to strike in 1941 over the issues of wage increases and the establishment of a seniority system, Sperry attempted to negotiate through the Brotherhood. In turn, the union held a meeting to discuss the company's offer. Frank P. Dyer, president of the Brotherhood, announced that the new offer featured "substantial" wage increases and "considerable concessions" on worker demands for a seniority system.[99] At the same time, however, two labor unions from outside the company, the UE and the IAM, were attempting to organize the

[96] Workers at Republic eventually joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM) a few years after the war's end, which will be discussed further in chapter 2. The employees of Grumman never did organize.

[97] John M. Peterson and Ralph Gray, *Economic Development of the United States* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1969), 401, cited in U.S. Department of Labor, *Report on the American Workforce 2001* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Publications and Special Studies, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001), 69. Almost all of this growth occurred following the passage of the Wagner Act in 1935.

[98] From 1940 to 1944, union membership grew from seven million to fifteen million. Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in WW II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Significantly, CIO unions expanded more rapidly than AFL unions during this period. AFL affiliates grew by 60 percent during the war, while CIO affiliates increased 82 percent. Leo Troy, *Trade Union Membership 1897-1962* (New York, 1965), Appendix 1-27, as cited in Christopher L. Tomlins, "AFL Unions in the 1930s: Their Performance in Historical Perspective," *Journal of American History* 65, no. 4 (March 1979), 1023.

[99] "Sperry Workers Weigh Offer," *New York Times*, Jun 28, 1941: 8.

workers at Sperry and bring them under their own tents. Despite Leiserson's observations about the origins of the company union discussed above, the NLRB ultimately ruled in 1941 that, in fact, the company dominated the Brotherhood of Scientific Instrument Makers of America.[100] The NLRB specifically directed Sperry to stop discouraging employees from joining UE Local 1202, one of the unions attempting to organize the company's plants.

The contest between the UE and the IAM over the right to represent Sperry's workers reflected the larger struggle that was going on in organized labor during this period. The IAM was a part of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the largest labor organization in the US prior to the 1930s. The AFL was composed primarily of urban, craft-based workers, as well as highly skilled industrial workers. Many of these workers were also "native" or old-stock immigrants, and they resisted the participation of newer, industrial workers in their organization. As Jefferson Cowie explains, these older, skilled union members worried that they were losing too much to the newer waves of immigrants that were entering the urban industrial centers of the US.[101] AFL members responded by trying to prevent newer, industrial production workers from joining AFL-affiliated unions.

The growing tension between craft-based and industrial-based unionism led to the creation of the Committee of Industrial Organizations, which later became the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The CIO grew directly out of the frustration of organizers such as John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers (UMW). At the AFL's convention in 1935, the organization refused to grant the UMW an industrial charter to be

[100] "Sperry Union Ruled Out," *New York Times*, Nov 29, 1941: 8.

a part of the AFL.[102] In consternation Lewis left the convention and started the CIO as a rival to the AFL, one that openly embraced industrial workers in industries such as mining, electrical manufacturing, and automobile manufacturing. In fact, the largest organizations within the CIO were Lewis's UMW, the United Auto Workers (UAW), led by Walter Reuther, and James Carey's UE. The AFL and CIO furiously competed for workers in the wake of the Wagner Act of 1935. The CIO added new members at a faster rate than the AFL, and by 1944 CIO members numbered more than half of the AFL total and accounted for nearly one-third of all labor organization affiliates in the US. One of the sites where the AFL and CIO competed for new workers was Sperry Gyroscope.

The election took place in December 1942. 17,000 workers in four plants, two in Brooklyn and two in Nassau County, participated in the election.[103] Since the company union had been disqualified by the NLRB, the employees had to choose between the UE, which was affiliated with the CIO, and the IAM, which was affiliated with the AFL ("no union" was also listed as a third option). The results were unambiguous. Of the 9,232 valid ballots, 6,564 voted in favor of the UE, while 2,210 voted for the IAM (and 458 voted "no union").[104] Local 450 of the UE was born.

Despite this victory, the leadership of the new UE Local was not immediately successful in solidifying its position through contract negotiations with Sperry's management. The first contract did not allow for a closed shop, meaning that employees

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[101] Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 21.
[102] Ronald L. Filippelli and Mark D. McColloch, *Cold War in the Working Class: The Rise and Decline of the United Electrical Workers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 26-27.
[103] "Election Today in Sperry Plants," *New York Times* Dec 22, 1942: 21.
[104] "CIO Wins in Poll," *New York Times* Dec 24, 1942: 11.

had the option of joining the union or not.[105] Unfortunately, membership numbers are not available from this period, though we might reasonably guess that this had a deleterious effect on membership density. The contract did contain provisions for a transitional "preferential shop," which was a weaker form of the closed shop where the employer agreed to give special treatment to union members in hiring decisions. Regardless, the Local's leadership took steps to remedy the situation with the next contract that they negotiated in 1945. Covering only one year, this contract still represented a substantial gain for the union. The new agreement completed the transition to a closed shop, meaning that employees were required to join the union. More importantly from Sperry's point of view, as the company pointed out in a press release, this process was completed "without even a momentary loss of production through friction with employees."[106] The press release suggests that relations between management and the union were cooperative, perhaps even harmonious.[107] As we shall see later, despite this Local 450 was actually capable of militant unionism at times, and management found its hands full on more than one occasion.

In fact, there are indications that relations between union members and Sperry management might have been less than harmonious on issues such as race and hiring. As discussed earlier, white workers did not always greet the entrance of African American

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[105] The first contract was hardly a failure, either. The agreement contained provisions covering wages and "a labor-management joint job evaluation program." Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 18, folder "Joe Fountain Releases, 1943".
[106] Ibid.
[107] The press release makes much of the fact that the parties involved negotiated the contract amongst themselves, presumably meaning there was no NLRB-sponsored mediation. However, the press release also refers to a Moses Shapiro, "mediator for both parties". Despite this seeming paradox, Sperry President Reginald E. Gillmor enthused, "This shows it can be done. Labor and management can sit down and solve their problems without outside aid or outside intervention. … We have reached a point where we, both of us, feel that the relations will continue for constructive operation of the greatest good for the greatest number."

workers with enthusiasm. White union members were initially no exception in this regard. However, according to company president Reginald E. Gillmor, the situation quickly resolved itself. In a talk he delivered in Chicago before the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Gillmor explained that the union initially had misgivings about hiring African American workers. However, the reservation disappeared shortly "and in their place has come a really sincere and courteous cooperation and mutual respect."[108] He went on to observe that of the more than 300 shop stewards, twenty-two were African American. This number suggests that approximately seven percent of Sperry's shop stewards were black in 1945. Furthermore, "One of the stewards is the only Negro in his department, so we have here an example of a Negro chosen by popular vote to represent an otherwise all white department."[109]

The reports of Reginald Gillmor notwithstanding, African Americans faced overt discrimination in several guises during World War II.[110] The experiences of African Americans in New York and on Long Island were no exception in this regard.[111] People such as Eugene Burnett faced overt forms of economic, social, and political discrimination. At the time of our interview, Burnett was 76 years old. Born in 1929, Burnett grew up in East Harlem. He worked for Republic during the early 1950s, where

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[108] R.E. Gillmor, "How can the Negro Hold His Job?" Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 18, folder "How can the Negro Hold His Job?"

[109] Perhaps it is worth noting that when the pamphlet was originally printed it featured the spelling negro, with a lower-case "n." The pamphlet was quickly reprinted with an upper-case "N." See letter from Mrs. R. P. Neuschel to Mr. Percy Shostac dated April 16, 1945, Ibid.

[110] For example, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[111] Other relevant works to consult on African Americans in particular include: John Komia Domatob, *African Americans of Eastern Long Island* (Black America Series), John Komia Domatob, *African Americans of Western Long Island* (Black America Series), and Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*.

he was very involved with the union and even helped orchestrate a wildcat strike in 1952 (which a later chapter will examine in more detail).

Prior to moving to Long Island and going to work for RAC, Burnett joined the Army in 1944, where he had his first experiences with consistent and explicit racism. He characterized himself as "a Truman occupation soldier," adding, "I was too young for World War II, so I went in five months after the war ended."[112] The experience that he had in the Army contrasted sharply with the life he had known growing up in a Manhattan neighborhood. He elaborated:

> I had, in other words I had experienced individual racism in east Harlem here and there. But by and large I lived a kind of integrated life, so to speak. Friends of different races, guys who played in the schoolyard, we played handball and softball and this and that. So, I don't know, in the service I ran into racism and was very, very angry about that. Because to this day I don't want to be buried in the national cemetery. I bought my own plot because I don't owe Uncle Sam nothing, he owes me for the insults that he exacted on me as a man in my life. I'm still very angry at what happened in the service, in that it's a hell of a thing to take a man and draft him into your army and ask him to die for you and then call him a nigger. That's the height of arrogance.[113]

Burnett's experience in the military clearly left him angry and disillusioned. Also intriguing is the reference to gender, to the insults exacted on Burnett "as a man." The experiences he had in the Army were demeaning in terms of both race and gender as Burnett weathered racial insults that also left him feeling emasculated.

The Army was not the only setting where African Americans faced explicit racial discrimination of this type. African Americans were the targets of discriminatory

[112] EB, 4/6/05.
[113] Ibid. Burnett was not drafted, but enlisted in the Army. This certainly does not minimize the validity of Burnett's perception of his experiences as a soldier. Whether he enlisted or was drafted, the experience of being verbally abused certainly would be memorable and degrading, perhaps all the more so because he actually volunteered.

practices in terms of hiring and housing. In fact, Long Island later became well known as one of the epicenters of segregated housing in the US.[114] This sort of discrimination was in place before the war, too, and was reflected in the workplaces of Sperry, Republic, and Grumman. Some activists hoped that the coming of WW II, with its dramatically increased demand for more labor, would change this situation by creating space for African American workers. Despite the intense demand of WW II, most employers still resisted hiring non-whites. The hypocrisy of the situation struck one contemporary observer (who was hardly alone). He noted, "The national Negro press came out with one sustained roar of protest against the sin of racial discrimination in a country preparing to defend democracy."[115] Reports of racial discrimination piled up during this period, including reports that singled out Sperry Gyroscope, GAEC, and RAC. One commentator observed, "During this war New York City constantly has been an area of labor surplus, and the Long Island aircraft plants have not used as high a proportion of Negroes as other local war industries."[116] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the result was that African Americans only comprised 3.2 percent of the workforce at Grumman and 3.1 percent of the workforce at Republic.[117] Even with the limited number of African

[114] For an overview of the rise of suburbs in the US (and the role that government agencies such as the Federal Housing Administration played in promoting them and encouraging segregation), see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[115] Lester B. Granger, "Barriers to Negro War Employment," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 223, Minority Peoples in a Nation at War (Sep. 1942): 72-80, 74. Indeed, the problem of segregation in a society that presented itself as the protector of freedom continued to plague the U.S. after the war. For a penetrating study on this, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[116] Robert C. Weaver, "Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 59, no. 4 (Aug., 1945): 597-625, 615. This was the result of several factors, including "early patterns of exclusion" that discouraged the entrance of African Americans, the distance of the plants from population centers of African Americans, and the fact that the Long Island plants had already completed their expansion when the companies finally began hiring African Americans.
[117] Ibid., 617. At the same time, according to Weaver, the percentage of the population that was African American in "New York, NY" was 6.1 percent.

Americans living on Long Island, they were underrepresented within these workforces. Table 1.4 lists the population of African Americans in Nassau and Suffolk County. In fact, R.E. Gillmor's aforementioned address before the NAACP was an attempt to mollify some of the company's critics. Grumman's and Republic's responses to these charges, if any, are unclear.

In general, the UE and other CIO unions adopted more inclusive positions with regard to race and membership than the IAM and other AFL unions. By WW II, most large locals, districts, and the international UE organization had adopted a pro-integration policy.[118] The IAM, on the other hand, was a bit slower to include black workers in its ranks, and had a long history of racial exclusion. In his account of the IAM, Mark Perlman notes that one of the major influences on the early development of the Machinists was what he labeled the "Southern influence," which "emphasized the superiority of a particular type of white, fully trained craftsmen."[119] The nonegalitarian nature of this influence worked on two levels – in addition to excluding black workers, it discriminated against semi-skilled or unskilled laborers. The IAM continued to exclude nonwhite workers well into the 1940s. Finally, faced with pressure from the NLRB, the IAM's executive council ordered the "whites-only" clause removed from the rituals of

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[118] Despite this, the official policy of integration often still ran into resistance as the result of white workers' prejudices. For example, see Ronald W. Schatz, *The Electrical Workers: A History of Labor at General Electric and Westinghouse 1923-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 128.

[119] Mark Perlman, *The Machinists: A New Study in American Trade Unionism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 3-4. The two other major influences that Perlman describes are the "Knights-of-Labor tradition" and the "pure and simple trade-union principle." When the union was founded in 1888, most of the nineteen original members had been members of the Knights of Labor, a secret, fraternal organization that was committed to "individual moral improvement," as well as the "regeneration of society along cooperative lines." The trade-union principle placed emphasis on the problems of "effective job control." This principle sometimes contradicted the Southern influence, since it emphasized the mutual, economic interests of all machinists, regardless of their personal prejudices.

membership in 1947.[120] The immediate result of this action was the creation of separate, African American lodges. Unsatisfied with this solution, the executive council intervened again, ordering the dissolution of the black lodges in 1954, basically requiring locals to abandon any policy (formal or not) of racial exclusion. The IAM was less successful than the UE and other CIO unions at breaking into the Long Island workforce during the 1940s for a variety of reasons, including internal conflicts such as this.[121]

In addition to the UE, other CIO unions were able to make inroads into the Long Island workforce and even attempted to organize workers at Republic and Grumman. In particular, in 1941 the United Auto Workers (UAW) became the collective bargaining representative for 240 shop employees at the Ranger Engineering Corporation, which was located right around the corner from Republic's site.[122] Ewald Sandner, the Long Island Organizer for the UAW, believed this victory put the workers at Republic and Grumman within easy reach of his organization. He confidently predicted, "We don't expect any

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[120] Ibid., 279-80. Critics from various locals blasted the executive council for taking this action, arguing that an executive mandate like this was inherently undemocratic. The issue of dropping the whites-only clause from the union's constitution had come up several times at previous conventions, including the 1945 convention. At that time the matter of amending the constitution was put to a roll call vote and defeated 2,173 to 1,958. Perlman notes, "As the vote suggests, the debate was vigorous and bitter, with many speeches based completely on cultural atavisms." Despite this, the executive council felt compelled by the passage of Fair Employment Practices Acts, culminating in the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, and took action over the objections of many rank-and-file members.

[121] One of the other reasons was a simple lack of organizers, a problem that continued beyond WW II. At one point in 1947, the IAM sent Hal Shean, Business Representative of Lodge 727, to Long Island to provide Local 1834 (Lockheed Aircraft Service Corporation) with some contract fine-tuning. Shean reported to IAM President Harvey Brown that the only union representative in the whole of Long Island was Brother Martin J. Buckley. "This gentleman, in my opinion, is doing a very good job but is sadly in need of assistance. His area is large and completely unorganized, outside of our I. A. of M. contract at Lockheed Aircraft Service." Buckley was trying to organize other work sites on Long Island using the Lockheed contract as a medium. Shean continued, "In my opinion, he definitely needs assistance during this period, such as an office and a girl to take calls." In addition to demonstrating the sort of obstacles that the IAM had to overcome in organizing workers on LI, this letter also illustrates the role that some union officials assigned to women. Letter from Hal Shean to Harvey Brown dated June 4, 1947, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, roll 340.

[122] "Strike is Averted at Aircraft Plant," *New York Times* Jan 12, 1941: 31.

difficulty in organizing the other plants here."[123] Three nearby plants – Republic, Grumman, and Liberty Aircraft Products, Inc. – employed some 7,000 workers at this point; and with the impending wartime buildup in production, thousands more were sure to follow. Indeed, Republic and Grumman alone would have close to 50,000 employees by late 1943. With an eye toward this untapped potential, Sandner continued, "We have shown that we are a responsible union and that the workers have the interests of national defense uppermost in their minds." He sought to calm fears that union organizing drives – or worse still, strikes – would disrupt production, thus slowing the war effort.

The UAW's confident predictions notwithstanding, workers at Republic and Grumman both rejected the union's advances. Very little information remains regarding these campaigns, particularly the effort at Grumman. Evidently Local 661 was not even able to generate enough support to induce an election in Bethpage.

One factor at Grumman may have been the continued (and in some ways even increased) importance of ethnicity in the workplace during this period. Former employees of Grumman indicated the importance ethnicity played there during the war. During his oral history, Robert Tallman observed, "Grumman was set up, during the war there was a line of nationalities depending on what plant you were in. The Italians were in one plant, the Germans were in another one." When I asked him if this extended throughout the company, he replied, "That was more a shop practice."[124] Tallman's observations provide acute insights into the roles of ethnicity and class at Grumman. As the demands of wartime production led to dramatic increases in the workforce, the working class employees of Grumman segregated themselves, to some degree, along

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[123] Ibid.
[124] RT, 3/10/03.

ethnic lines. Faced with the task of gaining entrance to and the trust of the ethnic subcultures of this workplace, organizers ran into yet another roadblock.[125]

Union organizers had more success at Republic, despite stiff resistance from management. Despite some success, or perhaps because of management's efforts, RACers (as Republic employees referred to themselves) rejected the UAW in an election in February 1944. NLRB officials conducted the election over a two-day period, with 93 percent of all eligible workers casting ballots. According to UAW organizer Clifford V. Fay, 58.9 percent of the voters rejected the union as their bargaining agent.[126]

Republic's management was seriously committed to keeping unions out. During the UAW's organizing drive, organizers would meet with other workers during their breaks and lunch periods. Perhaps anticipating this, the company had previously posted signs forbidding solicitation in either working or non-working time. Management fired one male employee for breaking this rule during a lunch period. He was handing out membership application cards to other employees during his lunch break. When four other men began wearing "shop steward" buttons, the company likewise fired them.[127]

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[125] Evidence suggests that this continued to be a problem after the war, as well. In 1949, the IAM was in the midst of a challenging organizing drive at Republic. Perhaps frustrated by the progress of the campaign, IAM General Vice President S.L. Newman proposed replacing one of the organizers, Brother Mastriani, with someone else. Martin J. Buckley, Grand Lodge Representative and future head of the local, wrote a letter to Newman asking him to reconsider. One of the reasons for retaining Mastriani, Buckley argued, was that his ethnicity increased his appeal among RACers. He noted, "On behalf of Bro. Mastriani, I would like to say that his ability to speak Italian as well as his manner in which he conducts himself while in the territory has been of great assistance to our organizing efforts. This area in and about the plant is predominately Italian." Letter from Martin J. Buckley to S.L. Newman dated May 3, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340.

[126] "CIO Loses Republic Election," *New York Times* Feb 9, 1944: 27.

[127] See "High Court to Review Union Soliciting Cases," *New York Times* Oct 10, 1944: 24; "High Court Upholds Union Solicitation Though Firms' Ban Antedated Activity," *New York Times* Apr 24, 1945: 19. In fact, this Supreme Court decision, known as Republic Aviation Corp. v. NLRB, 324 U.S. 793 (1945), became an important precedent that continued to shape organizing drives for the next forty years. For examples, see "Developments in the Law: Elections," *Harvard Law Review* 88, no. 6 (Apr., 1975): 1111-1339; and Paul Weiler, "Promises to Keep: Securing Workers' Rights to Self-Organization under the NLRA," *Harvard Law Review* 96, no. 8 (Jun., 1983): 1769-1827.

Although the Supreme Court ultimately ruled that these actions violated the National Labor Relations Act and ordered the employees reinstated, the chilling effect was obvious.[128]

In conclusion, World War II brought wholesale changes to the workplaces under study. Companies that had previously been relatively small saw their workforces increase more than a thousand-fold. Workforces that had started as almost exclusively white and male began to include substantial numbers of women and smaller numbers of African Americans. A shop floor culture once dominated by rough, working class masculinity found itself challenged by the addition of women and multiple variations on both masculinity and femininity. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, this substantial change in the workplace eventually generated a social and cultural backlash in some settings like Grumman, but created more fluid responses in others such as Sperry.

[128] These are not the only examples of actions that demonstrate the antipathy of Republic's management toward organized labor. They were active in the anti-union movement that gave rise to the Taft-Hartley Act following WW II. Clayton Ruyle, personnel director for Republic, acted as toastmaster at a 1947 event that featured none other than Representative Fred A. Hartley, Jr., co-author of the bill. Speaking before a meeting of the National Association of Personnel Directors, Hartley insisted that President Truman set up a board of inquiry in anticipation of breaking up a threatened nation-wide coal strike. See "Coal-Strike Board Urged by Hartley," *New York Times* Jul 2, 1947: 14.

Tables

Table 1.1 Population of Nassau and Suffolk County (source: US Census)

	Nassau Population	Suffolk Population	Combined
1930	303,053	161,055	464,108
1940	406,748	197,355	604,103
1950	672,765	276,129	948,894
1960	1,300,171	666,784	1,966,955

Table 1.2 Average Wage earners in Manufacturing Industries (Source: US Census)

	Nassau Population	Suffolk Population	Combined
1930	3,611	2,760	
1940	4,402	3,156	
1950			
1960			

Table 1.3 Males and Females over 14 in the Labor Force (Source: US Census)

	Nassau Males	Nassau Females	Suffolk Males	Suffolk Females	Combined
1930					
1940	123,449	42,666	53,087	17,149	
1950	201,639	67,433	72,148	25,975	
1960					

Table 1.4 African Americans on Long Island, 1930-1960.
Source: Historical Census Browser. University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html, accessed 7/25/05.

	Nassau Population	Suffolk Population	Combined	Percentage of Total Population
1930	7,960	5,502	13,462	2.9
1940	13,226	8,701	21,927	3.6
1950	16,955	13,120	30,075	3.2
1960	39,350	33,035	72,385	3.7

Chapter 2: "She just completed forty successful missions through the shop." Re-creating Separate Spheres in the Wake of World War II

Introduction

The end of World War II brought dramatic changes to the workplace. Immediately following the end of hostilities, employers and employees attempted to undo the extraordinary alterations ushered in during wartime. Tens of thousands of workers were fired once the Japanese surrender was announced. Companies in the Long Island aircraft industry struggled to determine which workers to hang onto, and which were expendable. Grumman resolved the problem by simply dismissing everyone (over the public announcement system, no less), and then notifying certain employees to report for work the next week via telegram.[1] Very few women or other minorities were among this select group.

Even for women who managed to survive the post-war layoff, the workplace they returned to was radically different. Grumman physically reordered the plant space, forbidding women from entering certain areas. Catherine O'Regan was one of the women who succeeded in keeping a job after the war. However, her ability to perform her work was radically compromised. Early in 1945, O'Regan transferred to Tool Engineering. Part of her duties included receiving tools, which included checking them

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[1] Richard Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 217-19. There were two noteworthy exceptions to the mass layoff – employees from personnel and engineering were all told to ignore the general announcement and report for work the following Monday. Personnel employees were presumably retained to help orchestrate the massive company-wide reorganization that was required, and the engineers were likely retained because they were harder to find, and also essential to the future of the GAEC. The company needed engineers to continue designing cutting-edge aircraft that would bring in

and making sure they were stored properly. Immediately following V-J Day, Grumman received a load of tools from an outside supplier. When the tools started to arrive, O'Regan went down to the shop floor to organize them. She recalled, "And the VP in charge of tooling saw me down there, and within ten minutes I was paged and said, 'You are no longer allowed on the shop floor.' Shop floor was denied to women."[2] Flabbergasted, she asked, "How am I going to do my job? How am I going to do this?" The reply came back, "You'll have to do it on the telephone." And, indeed, this was how O'Regan had to proceed, attempting to direct male coworkers on the shop floor from behind a panel of windows in a segregated office space.

O'Regan's experience illustrates the re-creation of separate spheres and disparate gender identities for men and women in the Long Island aerospace industry following WW II.[3] The post-war transition to neo-traditional gender roles took place both within the workplace and beyond. Looking at the workplace is especially important. While numerous scholars have examined the re-creation of separate spheres in the home during this period, few have focused on the workplace.[4] Incorporating the rich cultural sources that are available from these workplaces sheds light on the reactions of ordinary men and

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Navy orders. At this point, engineers represented a very small segment of the workforce. Of the 20,500 workers at Grumman in August 1945, only 350 were engineers.

[2] KO, 7/10/2003.

[3] "Separate spheres" is the idea that men and women have very distinct roles to fill in society. The concept was present in the U.S. during the nineteenth century and was subsequently popularized by twentieth century critics studying the nineteenth century. This model holds that the male sphere consists of high politics, business, and paid employment, while the female sphere refers to maternity and childcare, domestic issues, and religion. Examples of this literature are too voluminous to list fully here. Some path-breaking studies include Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74; Aileen S. Kraditor, ed., *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968); and Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 10 (Spring 1969): 5-15.

[4] For example, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988). May argues that the ideology of the Cold War had a major impact on domesticity during the 1950s, driving men and women to marry younger, start families, and embrace

women to the broad social changes that were sweeping over their lives.[5] Many men and women conveyed ambivalence toward the reaffirmation of separate spheres, even as others readily embraced it. As O'Regan's story illustrates, corporations like Grumman played a part in creating separate spheres in the workplace through explicit methods such as segregating workers. By limiting the spaces where women could work, employers created a hierarchy that communicated explicit notions about gender identity and relations. In addition to explicit practices like this, cultural mediums also played an important role. For example, visual representations were another method that conveyed gendered messages. Management sometimes provided the varied visual images that members of the workforce encountered, which reinforced neo-traditional gender roles. Frequently, however, employees created these images, which points to the active role that workers played in shaping the post-war corporate culture of companies like Grumman and Republic. While images from broader cultural influences such as television and movies doubtless also influenced these workers, focusing on print messages from the workplace itself allows for a closer examination of the workplace dynamic that these men and women participated in. These images offer commentaries about complex gender relations in the workplace, as well as at home. Examining sources such as political cartoons and comics from company newspapers, images in classified advertisements,

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traditional gender roles. The 1950s emphasis on family life was something new, not just a revival of the nineteenth century notion of separate spheres.

[5] Indeed, the very term "separate spheres" has undergone a critical reevaluation. Next Wave feminists have problematized the "separate spheres" model on a number of points: the separation of public and private life is not so neat as it suggests, the equation of "men" and "women" with "masculinity" and "femininity" oversimplifies complex social realities, the literature on separate spheres ignores questions of class and race, and others. For an informative and concise overview of the historiography of separate spheres, see Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," in Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher, ed., *No More Separate Spheres! A Next Wave American Studies Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002): 29-66. Other scholars have challenged the idea that the women's movement was "created by white, middle-class women, led by white, middle-class

photographs of male and female models from company newspapers, and testimony from oral histories reveals that the communities these men and women were part of sought to reassure them that the post-war period was, indeed, "a man's world," even as rapid social changes undermined this state of affairs.[6]

Significantly, the emphasis on recreating gender roles also had a substantial impact on union activism. Union organizers had a tough time recruiting workers at Republic and Grumman following the war, partly because of the very conservative workplace culture that they encountered. The final section of this chapter chronicles the struggles and ultimate success of the IAM in organizing workers at Republic. Part of this victory involved a conscious effort to reframe masculinity for workers at Republic. The kind of rough, individualistic masculinity that dominated the shop-floor culture there was antithetical (in the workers' minds, at least) to unionism, which emphasized fraternity and brotherhood. The gendered culture that proved so problematic for the IAM and other unions was also part of the post-war response to the entrance of women and other minorities in large numbers to the previously almost exclusively male workspace.

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women, to defend the interests of white, middle-class women." For example, see Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, "The Major Myth of the Woman's Movement," *Dissent* 46, no 4 (Fall 1999): 83-86 (quote from 83).
[6] My insights on this point are informed by the work of Michel Foucault. As we shall see, the way that everyone insisted it was a "man's world" in the 1950s suggests that, in fact, it was not. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). In this work, Foucault set out to denaturalize the idea that we live under a regime of Victorian sexual repression. This also resonates with subsequent scholarship that reexamined the way the 1950s were culturally framed as a haven of masculinity during the culture wars of the 1990s. For an excellent study that debunks a number of such misconceptions about the 1950s, see Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

Femininity in the Workplace

The previous chapter traced some of the tectonic shifts created within the American workforce during World War II. Despite traditional public sentiment against the idea of married women working, a large number of them entered the workforce.[7] Numerous scholars have written on the famous "Rosie the Riveter" campaigns, which contained powerful images of strong, independent women proudly taking jobs in the defense industry.[8] Shortly following the war, employers laid these women off en masse and thereby forced them from the workplace. O'Regan summarized, "After the war was over … they removed *all* of the females from the shop, or next day they were all replaced by men."[9]

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[7] For more on the rapid social changes underway, see Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), particularly Chapter 1, "This is the Way the World Was." In brief, the Great Depression had forced more women into the workforce and had simultaneously challenged the notion of the male head of the household as breadwinner for the family. The literature on this topic is extensive. Contemporary reports documenting the entrance of large numbers of married women into the workplace can be found in U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Women as Workers (A Statistical Guide)*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1950). This report states, "Married women living with their husbands rose from 30 percent of all women workers in 1940 to 46 percent in 1949." (9) For the first time in the history of the U.S., married women in the workforce outnumbered single women. See also Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, Special Bulletin No. 20 of the Women's Bureau, "Changes in Women's Employment During the War" (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office: 1944). For an example of the literature on the challenge to males as head of the household, see Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002).

[8] Class played an important role here. As Maureen Honey has demonstrated, war time propaganda pitched different messages to women of different class backgrounds. For example, *True Story*, a magazine aimed at working-class readers, featured reports and images of women in traditional occupations such as teaching, secretarial, or nursing. On the other hand, the middle-class *Saturday Evening Post* depicted women in more prestigious positions such as managerial or professional occupations. See Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). Another important work on women and propaganda during this period remains Leila M. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda during World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). As we shall see in the next section, in the case of the Long Island manufacturers examined here, the question of class identity played a complicated role in the employment (or lack thereof) of female workers. Particularly in the case of Grumman, women were excluded from certain workspaces, regardless of their social or economic standing.

[9] KO, 7/10/2003. Other sources confirm that all of the female employees in the shops at Grumman were fired. Anonymous interviewee, Northrup Grumman History Center, Bethpage, NY, 3/17/2003. This practice was certainly not limited to Grumman, however. For an analysis of the experience of women workers at Ford, and a summary of other relevant literature, see Sherrie A. Kossoudj and Laura J. Dresser,

Just like the "Rosie the Riveter" campaigns, cultural messages played an important part in the workplace transition that followed WW II. Visual representations of women framed management and male coworker behaviors. In editorial cartoons, calendars, photographs, and other forms of representation, women (and men) were subjected to a barrage of cultural messages. I will show a trend that occurred over the course of the late 1940s and early 1950s as visual representations of the female identity shifted from strong and independent to weak and ancillary. These traits were depicted through a variety of visual cues, including signs as subtle as the clothing worn by women. Following the war, skirts became standard fashion again for many women, sending signals to the viewer about their class and sexuality. I will also analyze the meaning of these trends and the ways that women and men responded to them. Social and cultural leads signaled expected gender relations for men and women in the workplace (and beyond). Women at Grumman and Republic responded ambivalently to these changes. Some expressed frustration, but others responded to the new gender relations positively. In contrast, gender relations at Sperry did not change quite so radically following the war, a development that a labor union may have helped shape.

The shift in female identity from independent to reliant immediately following the war was visible on both the social and cultural level, though less true, perhaps, for poorer or African American women. These workforces were fairly homogeneous, indicating the significance of race and class. Socially, companies banned women from many types of jobs and certain work areas that were thereby defined as male. Culturally, women were photographed, drawn, and otherwise depicted in situations and work positions that

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"The End of a Riveting Experience: Occupational Shifts at Ford After World War II," *The American Economic Review* 82, No. 2 (May, 1992): 519-525.

reinforced the newly emerging status quo. The earlier example of Grumman, where women were prohibited from the shop floor, illustrates one way that women were pulled from occupations that had previously been an important site of working class male identity.[10] As discussed in the previous chapter, when female employees did enter the floor, male workers subjected them to various forms of harassment.

In some cases, male workers used cartoons to make joking references to the potentially unpleasant experiences women had in the workplace. In particular, women on the shop floor were subjected to various forms of harassment. The experiences of Catherine O'Regan discussed in chapter one were particularly illustrative. At Grumman, male workers produced a cacophony of noise that followed female workers in waves as they moved through the factory. As we shall see, however, female interpretations of and responses to this experience varied quite a bit.

A variety of editorial cartoons referred to the experiences that O'Regan described, including the one that doubles as the title of this chapter. Figure 2.1 shows a woman with a medal pinned to her chest walking through an office, while another woman in the background explains the significance of the medal to a coworker, "She just completed forty successful missions through the shop!"[11] When company publications made light of routine harassment in this way, women were taught to think of themselves as outsiders, trespassers in the masculine community of the shop floor. Other cartoons and commentaries made similar references.

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[10] A number of scholars have examined the segregation of work by sex during and after the war. For example, see Ruth Milkman, "Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 4th ed., Linda K. Kerber and Sane Sherron De Hart, ed.s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). This article is adapted from chapters 4 and 7 of Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

Figure 2.1 “She just completed forty successful missions through the shop!”

Other examples demonstrate the way that male illustrators from Grumman depicted other men in the workplace responding to these kinds of behaviors. Figure 2.2 is another cartoon that appeared in the *Grumman Plane News* in 1948. The illustration shows a well-dressed man (perhaps signifying an engineer or executive) addressing a young woman who is crying and shaking in front of him. She is visibly upset, but the well-dressed man reassures her, “Now, now, I see no reason for the boys to whistle.”[12] Evidently this woman did not know about Catherine O’Regan’s magic rule about traveling in pairs. Regardless, the man depicted here discounted this woman’s concerns, raising the possibility that either he (and, by extension, the artist) did not believe her or that he simply wished to sweep the episode under the carpet.

[11] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 7 (March 29, 1951), 2. This image is discussed in more detail below.
[12] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 7, no 21 (November 11, 1948), 2.

Figure 2.2 “Now, now, I see no reason for the boys to whistle.”

This illustration is also an example of the kind of modified class tension that existed between shop workers and engineers. As we shall see, the real targets of this cartoon may very well have been the men on the shop floor who were doing the whistling or hammering to begin with. The artist who created this was Fred Dresch, an employee who worked in Grumman’s personnel department.

Still other evidence indicates the way that some women responded to the behavior that O’Regan described. Clearly, some women did not see this as harassing conduct. For example, a February 1950 issue of the *Grumman Plane News* contained a regular column entitled “Thru the keyhole.” This was a collection of gossip and news about employees from various departments that was always compiled, interestingly enough, by female employees. In this particular installment the author, Cathryn R. Scribner, noted, “Canoe Sales in Plant 10 gets all the brakes. It not only has Pat McGunnigle and Terry Donlon, two pretty gals, but also Betty Rugen, tall, dark and beautiful. Only one thing wrong with

Betty, she won't walk through the shop and give the boys a break. Guess she's shy…"[13] Evidently, the issue of moving through the shop affected many women employed by Grumman.[14] The phrase "give the boys a break" implies that for the male employees the sight of a woman walking through the shop was actually a welcome relief from the monotony of their own jobs. Indeed, if Scribner also had this meaning in mind, this suggests that perhaps some men and women even saw one another as helping each other out during these shop floor interactions. Either way, the hammering on metal objects filled two roles – it served as a brief break from work that the men on the shop floor simultaneously used to bolster their collective masculinity. As discussed in the previous chapter, creating a cacophony of noise gave male workers a chance to perform their masculinity, thereby proving their manliness to both male and female coworkers.

Related references to the experience of women on the shop floor abound. In 1951, there was a changing of the guard at *Grumman Plane News*, and Jean Miligi took over writing "Thru the Keyhole." Miligi's self-introduction was revealing. She described herself as the new "skirt" doing the column, and she referred to running "missions" through the shop.[15] The reference to running missions functions on a number of levels. Working for a Navy contractor that specialized in building combat planes that launched from and landed on aircraft carriers, these women might have found the experience of walking through an unfriendly male environment (the shop floor) comparable to a pilot running a mission through hostile territory. Also, as discussed above, women were not supposed to be on the shop floor in general, and so when they

[13] Cathryn R. Scribner, "Thru the keyhole," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no 3 (February 2, 1950), 2.
[14] And certainly this is not the only example of the "preferential treatment" women received. Catherine O'Regan referred to other examples such as the maintenance of separate payroll lists with male and female

were present it was generally to complete a specific task, hence the allusion to "missions." The next section in this chapter will parse out Miligi's reference to herself as a "skirt," which was also laden with meaning.

Why were practices like this so prevalent at Grumman? Part of the reason may have been the strong personnel connections between Grumman and its primary customer, the United States Navy. Grumman manufactured many planes for the Navy, including the F4F Wildcat, the F6F Hellcat, and the TBF/TBM Avenger during World War II.[16] Not surprisingly, many employees of Grumman came from the Navy. As a result, military customs suffused the company's corporate culture, which likely contributed to the particular kind of gender relations found there. Grumman was steeped in a hypermasculine military culture, which could sometimes take a more "rough" variety, as witnessed in the type of behavior examined here. [17] While looking at and objectifying women may not seem self-evidently "rough" (these exchanges apparently did not escalate to physical confrontations), the kinds of behavior O'Regan and others described do not quite square with "respectable" masculinity, either.

Perhaps unexpectedly, O'Regan's reaction to the unwanted male attention was ambivalent. O'Regan's account of her experience working on the shop floor at Grumman sounded bizarre, if not harrowing. The story immediately reminded me of figure 2.1, and

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employee names (women received smaller raises than men). In addition, when male employees turned fifty they were sent for a comprehensive physical, a practice that was not initially extended to women.

[15] Jean Miligi, "Thru the keyhole," *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 9 (April 26, 1951), 4

[16] Indeed, as mentioned previously, Grumman fighters were at the vanguard of combat in the Pacific theatre. There are a number of books that deal with the planes and production history of Grumman. For example, see Martin W. Bowman, *Images of America: Grumman* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 1999). For more on the connections between Grumman and the navy, see Randolph Paul Kucera, "Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and its 'familial' relation with the U.S. Navy" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1973).

[17] As we shall see later in this chapter, this masculine military culture helped undermine the appeal of labor unions. Significantly, both Sperry and Republic employees unionized during the war, before massive waves of veterans came to occupy the shop floor and engineering departments.

I described it to her. We might have expected O'Regan to react in any number of ways, from chagrin to consternation. Instead, she laughed and said, "That's kind of cute. Cute cartoon." Surprised, I followed up by asking her, "Sounds like it's referring to the kind of thing you're talking about." O'Regan responded, simply, "Of course." Clearly, even though the memory of men banging on metal as she walked through the shop floor had stuck with O'Regan for some sixty years, she was not bitter about the experience, and was even willing to view a comical reference to the practice as "cute."[18]

But why, exactly, would O'Regan view the cartoon reference to running "missions" as cute? A later observer might understandably think of this behavior as harassing. Perhaps O'Regan thought the cartoon was cute because of the medal. The idea of rewarding someone for valor in the face of a hostile wave of hammering might have struck her as charming.[19] The cartoon does not suggest who might have bestowed the medal upon the subject. Was it the woman's supervisor? Or perhaps it was simply

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[18]This was not the only form of special treatment that women received on the job. Another example comes from the pages of the *Plane News* near the end of World War II. An article entitled "GI Begs pretty GAEC girls drop him a line," *Grumman Plane News* 4, no 1 (January 5, 1945): 3, announced, "Attention, all you girls lucky enough to still be in your teens! Here's a chance for you to do something very nice for a soldier overseas." The soldier in question was the son of a Grumman employee. Writing from his station in England, the serviceman implored, "You have a lot of young and pretty gals working for you; how about telling a few of them to write, and if they can, send their pictures to a lonesome soldier." The article concludes by providing the soldier's address. In fact, this type of solicitation continued for some time into the post-war period. Women from all three of the companies under consideration, but Grumman in particular, were encouraged to continue making visits to veterans hospitals and charity events to help boost the morale of servicemen after the war was over.

[19] Regardless, O'Regan apparently did not find the experience too discomfiting. As alluded to earlier, O'Regan did not seem bitter about her experiences. Indeed, by the end of our interview she actually expressed concern that we had focused too much on negative aspects of her time at Grumman. This topic will be explored further in chapter [three], in a section that examines the question of pride and patriotism that the Grummanites felt, and how this relates to questions of history and memory for the historian. In brief, scholars have raised questions about the mediation process that occurs as an oral history is gathered and then presented in a format such as this. The risk here is that in focusing on these negative experiences, a study such as this actually reinscribes unequal power relations, reducing Catherine O'Regan's life to a trite cautionary tale (or perhaps even worse, a Whiggish narrative about how far workplace relations have progressed since the "Dark Ages" of the 1940s and 1950s). For an overview of some of these arguments, see Roxanne Rimstead, "Mediated Lives: Oral Histories and Cultural Memory," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 60 (Winter 1996): 139-65.

the artist himself, recognizing the difficulties that some women faced?[20] The most likely source for such an award seems to be the woman's female coworkers.

Still another possible explanation for O'Regan's ambiguous response relates to the uncertainties of oral history and the occasionally complex relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. In particular, perceived differences in class sensibilities may have had some effect on the way that O'Regan chose to frame some of her experiences for me. Her background suggests an interesting mix of working class and middle class elements, which means she possibly had a fair amount in common with the male workers that she was describing on the floor.[21] As indicated by her earlier characterization of these men as "Archie Bunkers" with "hearts of gold," O'Regan clearly felt solidarity with these blue-collar workers. As an outsider (and an academic, as well as a professional), I was asking her to discuss, among other things, some of her less savory experiences while working for Grumman. O'Regan quite possibly felt protective of the company in general and her fellow workers in particular.[22] When I asked her whether she had gotten to be friendly with any of her coworkers, she commented:

[20] Ultimately, the artist's intention with regard to the illustration is difficult to ascertain. The woman with the medal is holding her head high and walking at a brisk pace, indicating that she is focused, competent, and perhaps even proud. Many of Dresch's illustrations objectify female subjects and depict them as weak or sensitive. Consider figure 2.2, in which the female subject is clearly distraught as the result of running a "mission." In figure 2.1, however, Dresch seems to be explicitly acknowledging their ability to perform in the face of potentially uncomfortable working conditions.

[21] O'Regan's mother was a homemaker, and her father worked for Aetna Life Insurance. He managed the Inland Marine Department. This description of her childhood, though brief, suggests that perhaps O'Regan had a middle class upbringing. At the same time, the fact that she went to work for Grumman on the shop floor with a high school education, combined with her vivid memories of the Great Depression, suggests that she came from a working class family. The question of her class identity is further complicated by the fact that educational and work opportunities were fairly limited for women during the 1930s and 1940s, when O'Regan was coming of age.

[22] I am reminded here of an observation that Lisa M. Fine made while reviewing Sherna Berger Gluck's *Rosie the Riveter Revisited* (and a comment I must strongly second): "Gluck's most stunning achievement is that she has won the trust of working-class women who have every reason to close their hearts and minds to middle-class professionals and whose most private thoughts are recorded in a book for all to see." See Lisa M. Fine, review of *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, *American Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (Feb., 1989), 236.

> KO: Made some great friends. The shop ... the men in the shop were not as smart as the men in engineering, but they certainly were caring. You know, they were nice, fine people. They wouldn't stab you in the back. They were nice people when you got to know them. And they did get to be...
> SP: You mean as they were banging on the ...
> KO: Well that was part of the fun. But at our expense, you know? And you tolerate that, that goes with the territory.

O'Regan's observation provides further insight into her ambivalence about the treatment she received at Grumman. On some level, she tacitly acknowledged the performative aspect of the interactions between men and women, even on the shop floor. The hammering was part of the "fun," or the demonstrative interactions between men and women at Grumman. At the end of the day, she had great affection for these men, perhaps even more so than for her subsequent coworkers in engineering. The complexity of O'Regan's comments about her male coworkers also points to the complexity of the men who engaged in this behavior, a topic that is examined more fully later in this chapter.

Women from Republic also expressed familiarity with performative displays of manliness. Mary Bloom started as a clerk in 1952. In response to a question about interactions between women and men on the shop floor, she related the following story:

> MB: I had one time, [laughs] I came walking through the shop and this guy was up on a ladder, and even though I was sort of shy and everything, he started, he comes down the ladder and he's going like this [starts beating her chest], you know, instead of whistling, you know, and he gets on the floor, and he's banging the floor. And everyone's hysterical at him. Well, I thought it was funny. I mean, I was embarrassed, sort of. But there was no harm to it. He didn't mean anything by it, you know?
> SP: He was beating his chest like a gorilla.
> MB: Yeah. [laughs] And even I, who was sort of naïve, I thought, I didn't see any… But then, another type person would have been offended, like, how dare he do that sort of thing.

Bloom alluded to the way that different people might have perceived these interactions differently. Granted, this example is different from Catherine O'Regan's experience in important respects. Bloom's story involved one male, rather than many, directing some form of demonstrative behavior at one female. Also, Bloom knew the man. However, there are several vital similarities between the two stories. In both cases, the intentions of the male actor(s) are unclear. In both cases, at least one of the goals was to embarrass a woman coworker. In the case of Bloom, there may have also been some element of flirtation involved. Either way, the striking thing in both accounts is that these behaviors were performed in front of groups of other workers, probably overwhelming male. In both cases, this behavior was one way for male workers to prove their manliness to one another. Evidence from the *Plane News* suggests that management at Grumman likely turned a blind eye to the situation, thus tacitly encouraging these men to prove their manliness to one another. At the same time, other testimony from the *Plane News* and oral histories suggests that women were ambivalent about these kinds of behaviors. Some found them very upsetting, whereas others viewed them as part of the normal, performative interaction between men and women.

Another factor that may help to explain the ambivalence of some women regarding unwanted male attention was the presence of multiple femininities in these workforces. The previous chapter briefly discussed the way that competing notions of masculinity circulated in these company cultures. Likewise, femininity meant different things to different people. Distinctions often revolved around perceptions about the desirability of the work a woman performed. Sometimes these connections were also tied to class differences. Recall the distinction that Catherine O'Regan and Mary Bloom

made between "ladies" who wore skirts and "girls" who wore pants. Office work was more desirable than factory work, and a skirt signified that the wearer was a middle class, feminine office worker.[23] Tantalizing anecdotes suggest that the distinction between office "ladies" and factory "girls" also consisted of more than just differing fashion sensibilities. Recall the story of George Skurla from chapter one, in which he was initially embarrassed by the earthy jokes of the two "tough" women that introduced him to working on the shop floor. Also, the story of Cecelia Murphy suggested that women who displayed rougher traits were adopted more easily into the hypermasculine world of the shop floor. The distinction between these two different feminine sensibilities appears to be one of the continuities in these workplaces before and after WW II.[24]

In contrast to Grumman and Republic's situation, Sperry, the third company in my study, did not encourage aggressive male behavior toward women. Moreover, the different kind of gender relations may have been directly linked to the presence of a labor union. Evidence of this comes from Gabriel Parrish, who started working for Sperry Gyroscope Company in 1948. He began as a Sheet Metal Mechanic Grade B and was promoted to Sheet Metal Mechanic Grade A in 1958.[25] During this time Parrish was also a member of Local 450 of the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine

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[23] This was not a hard and fast rule, since some skilled factory jobs paid more than the secretarial jobs that women were placed in. However, as we have seen, most women did not have access to high paying jobs in the shop following the war.

[24] Other scholars have examined the informal hierarchies that formed within and between various jobs. For example, Alice Kessler-Harris describes the kind of distinctions that took shape among women office workers in the early part of the twentieth century. Women who performed clerical functions in a factory were held in lower esteem than coworkers who carried out the same tasks in the main office. See Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 135-36.

[25] GP, 8/27/03. The work of an A mechanic was more complex and involved more specialized metalworking techniques such as bending and cutting. An A mechanic had to know how to set up chassis, complex cabinets, and complete a total package for a product. In contrast, a Grade B mechanic would work with minor metal objects and parts that were mainly brackets and tubing, which involved the cutting,

Workers (IUE).[26] Working in this context, Parrish was well situated to observe the comings and goings of employees on the shop floor. I asked Parrish about the number of women employed at Sperry, which led to the following exchange about the treatment of women in the workplace:

> GP: Oh yeah, Sperry had no, shall we say, restrictions on women or minorities. It was a very well developed personnel department that they had there.
> SP: What about on the shop floor?
> GP: Yep, we had women working. Not many, but there were women. Oh yeah.
> SP: It's interesting, because I was talking to a woman who worked for Grumman in the immediate post-war years, and she said they actually had a rule there that women weren't allowed on the shop floor.
> GP: At Grumman? Is that right? Well, the union wouldn't go for that. [Laughs]
> SP: Really?
> GP: Well, I would say they would defend the rights of women to be employed.
> SP: That's interesting.
> GP: And we had a woman in sheet metal that was good at it. Her name was Kay Nelson. Her husband worked there also. But most of the women were located in the accounting departments, payroll departments, personnel departments, on levels in the office.

Parrish's observations about the role of the IUE at Sperry are supported by the fact that the union had a track record of lobbying on behalf of civil rights and other social justice causes, including organizing the first postwar conference of any union on the problems of women workers in 1949.[27]

Intrigued by the possibility that women at Sperry might have had very different experiences than women at Grumman or Republic, I asked Parrish to elaborate. He

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sheering, or bending of minor assemblies. He would not be involved with complex blueprints and assemblies and manufacturing of parts.

[26] As discussed in chapter one, the original union at Sperry was Local 450 of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) created the IUE in 1949 as an alternative to the UE, which was suspected of communist connections. Parrish started in 1948, just prior to this episode, but he had no memory of the internal conflict within the Local.

[27] U.S. Department of Labor, The Women's Bureau, *Milestones: The Women's Bureau Celebrates 65 Years of Women's Labor History* (Washington: 1985), 32. Significantly, during the 1960s and 1970s the IUE became involved in negotiations with Sperry that focused on correcting unequal benefits for women.

added, "Well, number one, there was no discrimination against the woman [Kay Nelson]. She was well liked and well respected. And she was efficient, and, I would say, a good sheet metal mechanic." He sounded surprised as I described the experiences of Catherine O'Regan at Grumman, stating that he had never seen any behavior like that at Sperry. However, he did observe, "That was like when women in the service first went in. They received all kinds of threats and discrimination." Again, this suggests the importance of the military connections for these employers. Particularly in the cases of Grumman and Republic, many of the workers were veterans, and had experienced the hypermasculine world of military culture prior to working in the defense industry.

Verifying Parrish's description of the different treatment of women at Sperry is not easy. However, no contradicting evidence suggests he is incorrect. Unfortunately, corroborating evidence is also scarce. If the kinds of incidents that O'Regan and Bloom described occurred at Sperry, Parrish may have simply forgotten about them. Unlike women from Grumman and Republic, none of the men volunteered anything about this kind of behavior during their oral histories, suggesting that these interactions made a much stronger impression on female employees than male.[28] Adding to the frustration is the fact that I was unable to conduct oral histories with any women that worked for Sperry. However, Sperry's company newspaper, the *Sperry News* contained none of the references to harassing interactions that peppered the pages of the *Grumman Plane News*, which lends credence to Parrish's recollections. In some ways, the *Sperry News* seemed to have a very different attitude toward women in general – one of the assistant editors

[28] It is also worth noting that two male employees, John Lowe and Eugene Burnett, did recall incidents like the ones O'Regan and Bloom described once I jogged their memories. Lowe worked for Grumman, Burnett worked for Republic.

was a woman, and the paper featured regular columns that specifically addressed female readers.

What factors accounted for the different treatment of women at Sperry? The company's shop floor employed so few women after the war that they simply may not have been threatening to the men working there anymore. Also, as Parrish indicated, the one female sheet metal worker he did know was married to another male sheet metal worker. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult to imagine other male employees devoting the same kind of attention to a co-worker's wife that Catherine O'Regan experienced during her early years at Grumman.[29] But still, the idea that the presence of the IUE at Sperry contributed to more egalitarian relationships provides an interesting contrast to the rougher masculinity on display at Grumman and Republic.[30]

In addition, perhaps male workers at Sperry were simply being eclectic in their construction of masculine identities. The previous chapter contained a brief discussion of the distinction between rough and respectable manhood. Maybe men at Sperry borrowed eclectically from the respectable tradition of masculinity following World War II. The next section will develop this point more fully, but it seems possible that male workers at

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[29] The topic of sexual harassment in the workplace, and on the shop floor in particular, has drawn attention from other historians as well. For example, see Daniel E. Bender, "'Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity': Historicizing Sexual Harassment in the Garment Sweatshop and Factory," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 91-116. Bender's article deals with the garment industry shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. Despite the very different settings and time periods, I would suggest that harassment filled some of the same roles in the shop floors examined in this chapter. Bender observes that sexual harassment was more than just an uncomfortable experience for women, "it was central to how men constructed and protected definitions of skill and the naturalness of sexual segregation at work." (1)

[30] Labor historians (as well as others) have begun to examine the question of rough versus respectable masculinity in various periods. The distinction was often bound to issues of class – for example, differentiating middle class from working class men. For an excellent case study from the nineteenth century, see Paul Michel Taillon, "'What We Want is Good, Sober Men:' Masculinity, Respectability, and Temperance in the Railroad Brotherhoods, c. 1870-1910," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 2 (2002): 319-338. For an examination of rough masculinity in the twentieth century, see Steve Meyer, "Rough Manhood: The Aggressive and Confrontational Shop Culture of U.S. Auto Workers during World War II," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 1 (2002): 125-147.

Sperry embraced some features of respectable masculinity such as defiant egalitarianism, while downplaying others such as patriarchal male supremacy.

Assessing the significance of the improved treatment of women at Sperry is not quite as straightforward as Parrish's account might suggest, either. Despite his observations about the role that the union might have played in preventing some discriminatory behavior, Sperry was like other manufacturers on Long Island and elsewhere during this period – the number of female employees was quite low.[31] Moreover, as Parrish indicated, the women who were employed were largely assigned to ancillary roles in office spaces.[32] Therefore, although Sperry was progressive in some respects, it was not quite immune to the sort of popular cultural attitudes toward women that commonly circulated in other work places. Even so, the women at Sperry were evidently not subjected to the same sort of hostile treatment as their counterparts at Grumman and Republic, at least partially due to the presence of a union.[33]

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[31] For example, as late as November 1962 the number of women employed in the manufacturing of durable goods in the Nassau-Suffolk region was 17,500, or merely 16.8% of the total work force. New York State Department of Labor, Division of Employment, *Labor Market Review* 16, no. 1 (January 1963), 36. Compare this to the overall employment figure of 35.3% of women for the entire state of New York in 1960, or the 37.8% national figure of that same year. For New York figures, see *Manpower Directions in New York State, 1965-1975, Technical Supplement* (New York State Department of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics, December 1968). National figures for 1960 come from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, as cited in Ann Foote Cahn, ed., *Women in the U.S. Labor Force* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 26. Clearly, women did not form a large segment of the workforce in question.

[32] A sizeable body of literature has appeared within the past twenty years examining the gendering of office spaces in the U.S. around the turn of the twentieth century. An important study on this topic is Lisa M. Fine, *The Souls of the Skyscraper: Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990). Fine's book addresses the way women entered the field of clerical work in large numbers around the turn of the century. This represented a real achievement for these women. However, in an unforeseen irony, the entrance of women into the field was part of what defined clerical jobs as women's work and therefore devalued the field in general. Fine's account is nuanced and considered – these positions still represented an improvement over most opportunities available to women at the time. Other works on the subject include Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); and Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Engendering Business: Men and Women in the Corporate Office, 1870-1930* (Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins University Press, 1994),

[33] Chapters three and four will revisit this question, paying particular attention to the case of Grumman and the Grummanites' rejection of the IOE. This was a different union, but as we shall see in, Grummanites

Even though women at Sperry received more egalitarian treatment, Parrish drove home the fact that separate spheres were re-created within the workplace following the war. He specifically discussed the way that women were allocated to office spaces. The return to separate spheres for men and women at home in the post-war years has been well documented. Less scholarship focuses on the fact that a similar process occurred within the workplace.[34]

As we have seen, women were only begrudgingly admitted into the male sphere of the shop floor (particularly at Grumman and Republic). Although women encountered less overt resistance in more "dignified" spaces like the engineering group, their access to opportunities were still greatly curbed, and they largely filled the role of helper or assistant. Following the war women were inscribed with non-threatening, supportive social roles, both inside and out of the workplace. Being recast in assistant roles meant that women who did work after the war were largely confined to non-production jobs.[35] The next section will delve deeper into the conceptions that animated attitudes toward the women who did work at these companies.

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rejected the IOE for a variety of reasons, including a real fear that the union would disrupt their corporate culture.

[34] See the Introduction to the dissertation for a discussion of the work of Ruth Milkman,.

[35] This is a theme that comes up consistently in the oral histories. There were only two occupational categories in which women composed a majority of workers for New York in 1960. The first was "clerical workers" (68.8%); the second was "service workers" (52.3%). These figures did not completely match national averages, which were 67.8% for clerical workers and 65.0% of service workers. *Manpower Directions in New York State, 1965-1975, Technical Supplement*, 102.

Questioning Motives

Another new development in the postwar years was that, even when women were permitted into the workplace in a limited capacity, editorial cartoonists and others called their motives into question. In addition to being recast in supporting roles, jokes produced by employees and professional artists suggested that the primary motive for women to be in the workplace was to find a husband. These fictional women were used as representative stand-ins, suggesting that women did not deserve higher-paying, more qualified positions because their motives and commitment to work were suspect.

Interestingly, sometime around 1952-53, the *Grumman Plane News* began farming out the cartoon work that appeared in its pages. Although Fred Dresch continued to draw panels and remained credited as "staff cartoonist" on the masthead, the subjects of his work changed dramatically. His cartoons began to deal with less overtly gendered subjects such as employee safety and company picnics (though some of these retained gendered themes). As we shall see in the next chapter, the change in Dresch's content may well have been the result of adverse reaction to some of his more inflammatory drawings.

However, if Dresch's subject matter changed due to controversy about his gendered messages, then the most curious aspect of the transition is that the pages of the *Plane News* continued to display gender-oriented humor. The only difference was that now the Cartoons-of-the-Month Company provided the illustrations.[36] And it was these very cartoons that began calling into question the motives of women for being in the workplace at all. For example, the September 11, 1953 edition of the *Plane News* featured a cartoon (figure 2.3), signed "Merrylen," in which a woman with close-cut

blonde hair and a black dress speaks to a man behind a counter labeled "cashier." The woman fumes, "I'm quitting. I just found out there's not a bachelor in the whole place!"[37] The cartoonist is clearly attributing this woman with a particular kind of motive for seeking employment. If she has no hope of finding a husband, then there is no reason to work. The important corollary to bear in mind here is the unstated assumption that, for this woman, work is optional. The primary purpose was not to earn money or other kinds of work satisfaction, but to gain access to a pool of men, one of whom presumably would enable her to return to the blissful world of unemployment for the remainder of her life.

Figure 2.3

Other examples include a cartoon that appeared in the March 12, 1953 issue of the *Plane News*. The illustration depicts a leering male ushering a shapely blonde into an office labeled "private". In the background, two stereotypically homely women (one is wearing glasses) are seated at typewriters. One addresses the other, "I can't understand

[36] Unfortunately, no archival records appear to have survived for this company.

why the boss hired her. She can't even type!"[38] The implication is clear; the male supervisor has hired the blonde-haired woman for reasons unrelated to her skills). However, the precise meaning of the cartoon is ambiguous. Is it too much of a stretch to imagine that she was hired for private sessions in the office? Is the woman a social climber with aspirations of marrying this man? Or is the male boss simply using her as a work-time plaything? We do not know the marital status of either character. One thing that is clearly called into question by this cartoonist is the professional competency of the woman.[39]

Other examples of this kind of humor explicitly suggested that the only reason women were present in the workplace was to provide men with visual and/or sexual satisfactions. Figure 2.4, again from the pen of Fred Dresch, features a shapely woman in an elevator wearing an attendant's uniform. A portly business man behind her is saying "Up – down! Who cares?"[40] We are not sure if the elevator is meant to represent a site at Grumman, but the artist again is appealing to "universal" values, suggesting that women in all work settings serve similar social functions. Also, the significance of the figure of the portly businessman remains ambiguous as well. Does this cartoon demean him as well, or is it equating the workers at Grumman with the owners and suggesting

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[37] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 19 (September 11, 1953), 5.
[38] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 6 (March 12, 1953): 3.
[39] This parallels other elements of popular culture from the time that also depicted women as gold-diggers. This was particularly visible in men's magazines such as *Playboy*. Barbara Ehrenreich has suggested this attitude played into a larger male concern with (or revolt from) the "breadwinner" ethic of the 1950s. In other words, men did not wish to share their income with "idle housewives." See Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1983). A more nuanced reading of the full spectrum of male responses to issues of commitment can be found in Kathleen Gerson, *No Man's Land: Men's Changing Commitments to Family and Work* (New York: Basic, 1993).
[40] *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 5 (March 2, 1950): 2

that all men at work share the same common masculine urges and/or interests?[41] In this regard, the male figure is also performing gender.

Figure 2.4 "Up – down! Who cares?"

Still other cartoonists editorialized about the various reasons that women went to work. However, where some clearly implied that women's motives were illegitimate, others seemed a bit more ambivalent on the subject. For example, the September 11, 1953 edition of the *Plane News* featured another cartoon that was supplied by the Cartoons-of-the-Month Company.[42] Figure 2.5 shows two women standing in front of a

[41] In fact, this figure of the portly businessman became a recurring figure in Dresch's work. He was also pictured in a cartoon that appeared in the *Grumman Plane News* 9, no 7 (March 31, 1950): 2. This one features the portly man in a suit talking to a curvaceous blonde and commanding her, "Remember, leave da goidle alone!" Dresch also contributed the masthead for a regular column called "Smith's Capers", which was the latest version of "Thru the keyhole" – again, a collection of news and gossip. For an example, see Irene Smith, "Smith's Capers," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 6 (March 12, 1953): 2. The letters of "Smith Capers" are presented as a cartoon, with nude women holding up each of the letters on a sign. In each case, the sign discreetly shields the woman's genitalia.
[42] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 19 (September 11, 1953): 5.

time clock that reads nine o'clock. They are both wearing coats, implying they have just come in to start work in the morning. They are in the process of punching time cards, and one woman addresses the other, "If I were married, I'd be just saying goodbye to my husband now – and going back to bed!" The women are both pictured in appropriate "ladies" attire for the period – skirts, high heels, and hats (indeed, the woman pictured on the left bears a striking resemblance to the complainant in figure 2.3). This cartoon does not seem to question the motives of women for working, per se. Instead, the cartoonist draws attention to the presumed "normal" social role of women, and provides an allusion to the difficulty of supporting a family with one income. In a society that placed such a high premium on separate spheres for men and women, and in which women were so rigidly defined in relation to their husbands, it is not unreasonable to think that these women had pressing financial reasons for seeking employment. Perhaps this is why the artist has depicted these women expressing regret over having to work at all – their inability to fulfill a normative female role (again, through the interpretive lens of the artist) leads to glum expressions of regret.

"If I were married, I'd be just saying goodbye to my husband now —and going back to bed!"

Figure 2.5

Still other cartoons went further, questioning the motives of women outside of the workplace, too. An early example of male artists depicting women beyond the workplace (for display within the workplace) comes from the pages of the *Grumman Plane News*. An editorial cartoon (figure 2.6) that appeared in the May 11, 1950 issue featured an unattractive, overweight man in a suit (replete with thick glasses, buck teeth, and no hair) addressing an attractive, blonde woman seated next to him on a couch (complete with cigarette dangling drolly in hand), "I'll put it this way then – marry me for my money."[43] The woman was clearly dismissed by the commentator as a social climber.

Figure 2.6 "I'll put it this way then – marry me for my money."

Interestingly, the cartoon depicts the male in an unflattering light, too. The rather unfavorable depiction of some men in these company newspapers will receive a fuller treatment in chapter three. Briefly, the temptation might be simply to read the bespectacled man as a sod – someone who is offering the only thing he has to offer,

money, in exchange for a beautiful wife. In this regard, the joke could be read as exclusively focused on the female character – the man's homeliness makes her all the more superficial. However, the artist here is Fred Dresch, which adds an extra dimension to the analysis. Dresch lampooned everyone in his cartoons, including white women, white, blue-collar men, and white, male corporate managers. This observation about Dresch leads to the conclusion that the treatment of the male subject here is more complex (and much less flattering) than one might initially imagine. The cartoon may be reflecting class tension between white-collar workers and their managers or gender tension over competing sensibilities regarding masculinity for all white-collar workers.

The critique of workplace motives notwithstanding, evidence indicates that some men and women did indeed want to meet people through work, and that employers even encouraged and facilitated such meetings. *The Sperry News* ran an article that highlighted the success of their recreational programs for this reason.[44] Pointing to a series of stories that had recently appeared in the Long Island *Press* "on the problem confronting unmarried persons in the area," the editors quoted, "Many [college] graduates showed a preference for big companies with a 'big happy family' policy, like the Sperry Gyroscope Company." As we can see, the desire to meet a potential spouse through the workplace was perhaps not as stigmatized as some of the editorial cartoons might suggest, and may have even been a selling point during recruiting. Indeed, at least one of the former employees I interviewed met his wife at work. Gabriel Parrish was actually working for Columbia during World War II when he met his spouse, who was employed as a secretary at the time. Robert Diflo also met his wife while working at

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[43] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 10 (May 11, 1950): 2.
[44] "Sperry Recreational Activities Praised," *The Sperry News* 15, no. 14 (October 6, 1958), 6.

Republic. A 1953 article from Grumman's newspaper tells the story of Gene and Jeanie Goltz, who married and started a family after meeting at work.[45] These examples suggest some ambiguity in male attitudes toward the image of conformity in the 1950s. When confronted with the social pressure to marry and assume the traditional role of husband, some men sought to escape or reject these pressures by adopting the kind of stereotypical attitudes outlined above.[46] But as suggested by the popularity of Sperry's recreational programs and the oral histories of employees like Parrish and Diflo, other men embraced the role, thus complicating the cartoon stereotype.

These ambiguities notwithstanding, ideas about meeting spouses were still distinctly gendered in a historically specific way. In particular, the question of who was to propose marriage to whom was an issue that required strict adherence to traditional gender roles for many men. For example, the *Plane News* asked four men, "What advice can you offer for handling a Leap Year proposal?"[47] Basically, all four men offered advice on how to dodge the proposal altogether. Joe Marks said, "When I meet a girl and take her out a few times and she proposes to me I tell her how well off she is with her career and freedom. That usually works. But if I should meet a girl that is nice with a pleasant personality, and she likes boating, fishing and weighs about 135 pounds, I would say 'yes!' tomorrow." Roy Stephenson insisted, "I'd jump off the nearest bridge … However, on second thought, first I'd check her bank account – but personally! Furthermore, I don't think my heart could stand the shock!" So even though some

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[45] "A Decade of Grumman," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 1 (January 8, 1953), 1.
[46] Here again, see Ehrenreich, *Hearts of Men*.
[47] "You Can Quote Me," *Grumman Plane News* 11, no. 5 (February 28, 1952), 2. A "Leap Year" proposal refers to the practice of women asking men for their hand in marriage, a tradition associated with Leap Year in some cultures. For a history of this practice, see Michael Edward McKernan, "Persistence and change in gender role-reversal phenomena in American social dancing" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 2002).

employees did not object to the idea of meeting a spouse at work, the notion of a woman transgressing the traditional male domain of proposing marriage represented a jarring departure from gender roles.

As earlier examples have hinted, even when the motives of women were not being called into question by editorial cartoonists, their competency became the focus of lampooning humor. Some of these cartoons explicitly called women's competency in the workplace into question. The *Grumman Plane News* from July 30, 1953 featured a cartoon that disparaged someone applying for a job. A woman is sitting in front of a personnel manager, saying "Don't check my references. I want to get this job on my own."[48] Still another example (and another Cartoon-of-the-Month contribution) can be found in the August 27, 1953 edition of the *Plane News*. Here a woman addresses a man seated behind a desk, "I can take sixty words a minute, if you can spell that fast."[49]

These kinds of concerns about the intelligence and competence of female employees were not just expressed through editorial cartoons, either. They were also relayed anecdotally in the pages of company newspapers. One such example of how some women were regarded as none too bright comes from the *Plane News* of February 2, 1950. Cathryn R. Scribner relates that "A girl from Plant 5, who hasn't been with Grumman too long, went stalking into Chet Abrams office the other day demanding to

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[48] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 16 (July 30, 1953), 3. This piece was also provided by Cartoons-of-the-Month. Interesting that this is also physically placed under the "Smith's Capers" column, which still has those women holding up the signs.

[49] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 18 (August 27, 1953), 8. Who knows, perhaps the rise of Microsoft's Spellchecker program represents a response to concerns such as these. Moreover, these kinds of cartoons were not limited to the pages of Grumman's newspaper. For example, the *Sperry News* reprinted a cartoon from the *Wall Street Journal* that featured a woman speaking to someone from the US Treasury. She inquires, "I've got some money I want inflated – who do I see?" *Sperry News* 17, no. 3 (February 29, 1960): 2. Jokes such as this depicted women as unable to comprehend the world around them (particularly the separate, presumably male sphere of high finance and business).

know why she was being released."[50] Apparently the episode was based on a misunderstanding (the woman had misread something on a timecard that was returned to her). The story concludes, "You can imagine what an embarrassed young lady she was when she left the Employment office." This account implies that the young woman in question was certainly headstrong, but also not very adept at a task as simple as reading time cards. Presentations like these signify a change from the wartime presentation of women as competent and capable (even if overly worried about fashion).

Representations of women in the workplace went beyond simply challenging their presence on the basis of motives such as gold-digging or social climbing – illustrations like these undermined the competence of women to perform even the menial assistant tasks that they were, in fact, largely consigned to. All of these cartoons depict women in office or other professional settings such as banks, too. Thus, just as the presence of women on the shop floor was challenged, their presence in office spaces was as well. The next section explores another way that gender roles were represented in these workplaces – clothing.

Fashion and Femininity

As it does today, fashion played a large role in demarcating gender identities in the years immediately following World War II.[51] Recall that Jean Miligi referred to herself as a

[50] Cathryn R. Scribner, "Thru the Keyhole," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 3 (February 2, 1950), 2.
[51] The topic of dress history has received serious and insightful attention from scholars for some time. An early example is Alice L. Kroeber and James Robinson, "Three Centuries of Women's Dress Fashion: A Quantitative Analysis," *Anthropological Records* 5, no. 2 (1940): 111-154. More recent scholars have been

"skirt," a popular reference from the time. Just as it did in the home, fashion played an important role in demarcating separate spheres at work. And just as we saw in the previous chapter, women responded in complex ways to these social norms, often embracing fashion as a marker of identity and social distinction, rather than rejecting it as an oppressive form of style. Also, comments by male workers from the time reveal that women's fashion also reinforced masculine behavior and identity.

Catherine O'Regan's observations highlight the complex responses that fashion generated in women during and immediately following the war. When I asked if her experience working in engineering was similar to that of the shop floor, her immediate response related to fashion and attire. O'Regan noted, "Oh no, [engineering was] much more dignified. First thing in engineering, I could wear a skirt. And in 1942-43, women didn't wear pants. Ladies wore skirts. You would never appear in pants on the street. And so the first thing, we were delighted to be able to put your skirt back on."[52] O'Regan's reference to engineering as "more dignified" hints at the class distinctions that existed between different departments at Grumman, and also suggests the way that class sensibilities informed self-conceptions of gender and identity. O'Regan liked working in engineering because it gave her access to a different kind of femininity, one she could display publicly through clothing. Clearly, she was eager to return to the normative, respectable female fashion of the time. O'Regan's assertion that "ladies wore skirts"

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influenced by the insights of Ann Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes* (New York, 1978). Indeed, the question of fashion and gender has received serious attention as well. For example, Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele, ed., *Men and Women: Dressing the Part* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1989) examines the historical relationship between outward appearance and social definitions of masculinity and femininity. Of particular note is the introductory essay by Valerie Steele, "Appearance and Identity," which offers a critical overview of popular writing on the history of dress. Fortunately, contemporary dress historians no longer need to apologize or justify examining material culture such as clothing for insights into the past. For example, see Lou Taylor, *The study of dress history* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), especially the introduction.

indicates that dignified, middle class women did not wear pants in public.[53] Uncomfortable appearing in public in slacks (traditional garb for men or working class women), O'Regan welcomed the opportunity to resume wearing skirts to work.

The topic of appropriate (or desirable) female attire appeared in other contexts, too. For example, the *Plane News* featured "You Can Quote Me," a regular column that asked four Grummanites a question and then posted their responses. The issue from March 16, 1950 asked "Is it true that men would rather see a woman in an evening gown than a bathing suit?"[54] Four men responded to the question. The first, Augie Walsky, stated somewhat boldly that he preferred bathing suits. He elaborated, "And it's pretty obvious that most men do, too. You never see a man reading a fashion magazine but they sure go for copies of *Look*, *Peek*, *Glance*, and *Eye*." By asserting that "most men" preferred to see a woman in a bathing suit, Walsky invoked masculine sensibilities to reinforce or legitimize his point of view. More interesting, though, is the second line quoted, where Walsky asserted that men never read fashion magazines. Or rather, he asserted that men were never seen reading fashion magazines. Walsky's comment points to an important ingredient in this mixture of fashion – the performative aspect of gender. Sociologists, anthropologists, and historians have long been concerned with performance as a part of identity.[55] Here, Walsky worried about even admitting to the possibility of

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[52] KO, 7/10/03.
[53] Significantly, the company made concrete arrangements to accommodate this return to normative fashion. The company newspaper for January 20, 1949 brought the following announcement: "Attention girls! After this week you won't have to worry if you catch your stockings during working hours because nylon stocking machines will be installed in the ladies room of all plants. Under the sponsorship of the welfare department these machines will offer top-quality hose at a nominal price." See "Welfare to Install Hosiery machines," *Grumman Plane News* 8, no. 2 (January 20, 1949): 3.
[54] "You Can Quote Me," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 6 (March 16, 1950), 2.
[55] A groundbreaking work (and still fascinating reading) is Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959). Goffman's book focuses on practice, on the actual performative aspects of identity in our quotidian lives. The book was enormously influential and very suggestive. Dress historians have also contributed to this enquiry, though focusing more on the role of

reading magazines that were identified as the provenance of female readers. This demonstrates that performing "maleness" could also perhaps be fraught with its own anxieties during this period.

Equally interesting is the fact that the magazines Walsky expressed a preference for, magazines like *Look* and *Peek*, ostensibly provided a format more oriented toward news, politics, and gossip, but were actually just as explicit as fashion magazines in coaching women and men about how to behave in public (or, in other words, how to perform gender). For example, *Look* magazine for April 4, 1944 featured an article on how "girls" should behave around the office.[56] This included pointers such as do not be a hypochondriac ("Bosses hate women who droop over their desks looking pale and imposed upon") and keep an organized work area ("Keep your desk as though you expected to break a leg on the way home – then you can picture the boss seeking a memo in your drawer and still be sure your pay will go on."). Several of the pointers in this article explicitly addressed clothing, with implicit messages about class identity lurking beneath. For example, concerns about the pretensions of lower-class women motivated one warning. The article cautions women not to overdress, chiding one hypothetical office worker, "Beneath her station is a mild way to describe this girl who is slumming every minute she spends in the office, who dresses to imply she has just stopped in to

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garments in defining gender (and ethnic) identity. For example, R. Barnes and J.B. Eicher, *Dress and Gender: making and meaning* (Berg: Oxford, 1993) point out that clothing acts as both indicator and producer of gender identity.

[56] Dorothy Cocks, "Office Etiquette: How to win raises and influence bosses, as explained by an expert," *Look* 8, no. 7 (April 4, 1944): 58-61. *Look* was a magazine that appeared to be aimed at a general readership. It covered a combination of news, entertainment, and fashion, and reached a large audience. Alfred Politz Research, Inc. estimated that an average issue of *Look* reached 15.8% of all individuals over the age of 10 in the U.S. (curiously, this consisted of 17.1% of all males and 14.7% of all females). This represented a larger audience than such household names as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, and *Good Housekeeping*. See Alfred Politz Research, Inc., *The Audiences of Nine Magazines: Their size and Characteristics* (New York: Cowles Magazines, 1955), 11. *Peek*, on the other hand, appears

greet the working classes on her way to tea at the Ritz." At the same time, office etiquette required that women not dress beneath their station, either, and that they try to appear pleasing to the men in the office. As the author implored to a hypothetical "Raggedy Ann", "Don't get waves and manicures just for dates; try to please the boss as much as you aim to please the boys." Tellingly, excerpts from this article were reprinted in *Sperry News* under "It's a Working Woman's World," a regular column that was directed at female employees.[57] Clearly, articles and advice like this resonated with the kind of corporate culture that existed at Sperry. In this regard, the workplace was a kind of public space itself, a sphere outside the home where women needed guidance.

Walsky's comments about what men would not be seen reading in public might well lead one to wonder what kind of magazines men were seen with in public. We might glean an answer (as well as an example of how children were socialized into the values of objectified women) from a photo contest held at Grumman. One of the winning photos featured a baby with an issue of *Playboy* open in front of him. The caption reads: "Exhibiting an early interest in men's mags, Richy Martin, 10 months old, was busy concentrating on the girls while Daddy snapped the picture that earned second prize in Children's class."[58]

Returning to the question of whether men preferred evening dresses or bathing suits, the other respondents provided answers that revealed a certain degree of editorial

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to be what readers at the time might have called a "girlie magazine." I have been unable to find copies of *Glance* or *Eye*, though the titles suggest they might fall into the latter category.

[57] See "Office Etiquette," *The Sperry News* 3, no. 10 (April 15, 1944): 8. "It's a working woman's world" first appeared during WW II, and at the time was largely directed at women working in manufacturing settings. Many of the columns focused on fashion in another sense – safety. As discussed in chapter one, women were urged to keep their hair covered under hairnets or hats to avoid getting it caught in the machines they were working on. The column, redubbed "It's a woman's world," continued after the war, but turned to other, more normative (even at times domestic) concerns such as comfortable footwear for the office, spring fashions, and entertaining in the home.

complicity in the "joke." Obviously a certain amount of this can be gleaned simply from the editors' selection of the question. But in addition, the editors concluded their report of Augie Walsky's response with a discrete "P.S. He said more but it's censored." The second respondent, Herman Schweikert, replied "Hmm, what did you say?" The editors added parenthetically, "and there was a gleam in his eye." Schweikert went on to say "a bathing suit is fine" but concluded "I suppose they do look better in a beautiful evening gown. The gown is more unusual and leaves more to the imagination." The editors once again chimed in, "(That's what he said but he wasn't too convincing. He still had that look in his eye.)"

Other examples from the pages of the *Plane News* testify to a popular concern with skirts versus pants for women. The March 2, 1950 edition of "Thru the keyhole" (still penned by Cathryn R. Scribner) featured a picture of two sets of female legs (cut off at the waist) draped over a desk with the caption "Recognize these?" (Figure 2.7) The copy continued, "Well, you boys have seen both these pair of, shall we say limbs, many times and can probably name the owners right off. However, the gal who totes around the pair in the front of the photo went through the shop the other day in slacks and no one recognized her. Oh hell, what's in a name ... or a face!"[59] This episode is interesting in part because the author was a woman. Scribner's comments complement the complexity of female responses to the gendered divisions in workplaces like Grumman. Even though some women clearly did not enjoy the experience of having a chorus of noise escort them through the shop floor, others seemed to tacitly approve of the practice (or at least to publicly display appropriate responses that would not, in the words of Catherine

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[58] *Grumman Plane News* 17, no. 19 (October 3, 1958), 7.
[59] "Thru the keyhole," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 5 (March 2, 1950), 6.

O'Regan, "upset the apple cart").[60] In other words, some women also participated unreservedly in the performance for men. On the issue of women tacitly or even explicitly approving of these kinds of interactions, scholars who have examined the phenomena of the "male gaze" inform my work. First popularized by Laura Mulvey, this refers to the way in which women were socialized to view themselves and each other as objects.[61] Oral histories and company publications indicate that some of the women employed at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry accepted or even responded positively to the social and cultural changes taking place there after the war.

Figure 2.7 "Recognize these?"

[60] As alluded to in the earlier section on "Femininity in the Workplace," I have very little to indicate what men working at the time actually thought of the practices described by Catherine O'Regan and the other women from Grumman and Republic. During the oral histories, most male respondents expressed surprise when I related O'Regan's story. A couple of the men did acknowledge encounters like this on some level, perhaps mingled with a sense of guilt or disapproval. As seen in the work of Fred Dresch above, at least one of the male cartoonists at the time expressed empathy for these women in some contexts. And, indeed, George Re, another cartoon creator who is examined below, also produced cartoons that displayed sympathy for women and even turned the tables on men.

[61] See Laura Mulvey, "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), 6-18 and Claire Johnston, ed., *Notes on Women's Cinema* (London: Society for Education in Film and Television, 1973). This can be a difficult citation to track down – it is readily available in the collection Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989): 14-26.

Masculinity in the workplace

Continuing to examine the way that work was gendered in these companies following the war, we now turn our attention to the effect this gendering had on the masculine identity of male workers. Job categories were generally (if not formally) assigned to men or women following the war. In this way, companies reinforced the manly identity of male employees, even as they introduced other changes that undermined it. In addition to practice-oriented methods like categorizing certain jobs as male work, masculinity was represented and reinforced in other, cultural ways following the war.

Part of the gender backlash that took place after WW II involved redefining the workplace as a site for masculine identity formation. As part of this effort, job categories were re-gendered in particular ways. This entailed getting rid of many women and reorganizing those who remained into ancillary positions within the workforce. The corollary to this definition of some jobs as female was that other positions were understood to be the provenance of male employees. This division extended beyond the shop floor, too. Donald Riehl made some fascinating observations about how occupations were gendered and what this meant for identity formation in the office. He worked for Republic from 1951-1964 with two years out for military service in Korea. As we discussed the progression of his career at Republic, Riehl offered the following assessment:

> And then I moved into administrative engineering, got a job as an administrative assistant. … In those days it was mostly a man's job. And I worked with the chief support engineer, and tended to administrative matters. Not typing or filing, but administrative kinds of tasks for engineering.[62]

[62] DR, 7/9/03.

This example illustrates the way that job categories were gendered following WW II. Tasks such as typing or filing were considered women's work, while other jobs such as administration or engineering were considered men's work. A little later, we returned to the topic of gender and administrative assistants. I asked Riehl, "So a few minutes ago when we were talking, you were saying your title was administrative assistant at a time when, how did you put it?" He responded:

> It's a man's job, yeah. Women were clerks and secretaries. … In those days there was a distinction between a secretary that did typing and filing and an administrative assistant who took care of personnel matters … any kind of business administration tasks, financial planning, that sort of thing … the engineer himself would concern himself with technical tasks and there would be the administrative assistant's job to do the administrative aspect of running the department, for, in my case, chief ground support engineer. So you were involved with personnel matters, with various and sundry paperwork.

Riehl's analysis provides keen insight into the cultural context that framed the way these workers – particularly men – thought about the tasks they performed. Gender was transcribed in work roles, so an employee's occupation reinforced his or her sense of masculinity or femininity.[63] Men's work typically consisted of tasks such as planning, accounting, and managing, while women's work generally consisted of typing, copying, and filing. In the much more heavily gendered workplace of the Republic Aviation Corporation of the 1950s, the title "administrative assistant" reaffirmed a male

[63] On some level, this is hardly a novel observation. Sociologists and other academics were even studying the strong connection between occupation and identity during the period under study. For example, see Howard S. Becker and Anselm L. Strauss, "Careers, personality, and adult socialization," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 3 (Nov., 1956): 253-260. Becker and Strauss began by noting, "Adult identity is largely a function of career movements within occupations and work organizations." (1) The contribution of this dissertation involves analyzing how the categories that shaped the identities of these workers were created, and how this different understanding of identity helps to explain certain actions undertaken by these employees.

employee's masculinity (as opposed to the feminine label of "secretary," which Riehl feared I was combining with his title).[64]

The division of job titles and tasks following the war was not just visible socially, either – a cultural process was underway as well. Just as women encountered images that reinforced expected changes in their roles, men confronted similar messages about what constituted an appropriate masculine identity. Male employees faced a variety of prompts that instructed, encouraged, and ultimately informally enforced compliance with suitably male behaviors. These prompts sometimes came in the form of observations about typically male activities, which were explicitly contrasted with female ones. *Grumman Plane News* featured a column from Irene Smith that offered commentary on the gendered implications of the changing seasons. Writing in March 1953, Smith observed that "Even tho' the days are still a bit on the chilly side, Spring seems to be in the thoughts of everyone. The gals are talking about and appearing in spring finery (and looking mighty cute, too), while the boys are concentrating on baseball, golf and fishing."[65] And, indeed, interest among male employees seemed intense on the subjects of baseball, golf, and fishing. As cited earlier, Grumman, Republic, and Sperry all had numerous hobby clubs to encourage and support male employees as they pursued these

[64] Of course, Riehl's observation also has to be understood within the context of its own time. This oral history took place in 2003, when Riehl was 70 years old. He was evidently uncomfortable with the perceived blurring of gender roles in the contemporary business world, and what that might have meant for his own sense of masculinity in the past. Additionally, he may have added this commentary for my benefit. Since Riehl was speaking to a younger man (I was 33), he may have been concerned that I would be unfamiliar with how the title "administrative assistant" had changed (and, I must confess, this exchange did add new insights to my analysis, as evidenced here).

[65] Irene Smith, "Smith's Capers," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 6 (March 12, 1953): 2. This was a regular column, much like "Thru the keyhole" and other columns discussed in previous chapters – the main purpose of "Smith's Capers" was to convey amusing or informative bits of gossip about employees. In keeping with the observations made in the previous section about the visual representations of women in these workplaces, the letters of "Smith Capers" were presented as a cartoon. A row of nude women each held up a letter on a sign, which spelled out the title of the column. Each sign was strategically placed to cover the cartoon woman's genitalia.

recreational activities. As Catherine O'Regan and others pointed out in their oral histories, these clubs were largely the provenance of male employees.

In some cases, women workers expressed their expectations of male behavior. An issue of *Grumman Plane News* from 1953 featured a revealing edition of "You Can Quote Me." The people interviewed for this column were generally men, but on this particular occasion four women were asked, "What do you find the most irksome characteristic of men?"[66] The answers offer a fascinating glimpse into the kind of cultural negotiations that occurred at workplaces like Grumman. These women conveyed a subtle understanding of the distinction between rough and respectable masculinity, and encouraged men to embrace the latter.

In some instances, women expressed skepticism about symbolic expressions of masculinity such as clothing and accessories. The first respondent, Marilyn Riggs, commented disapprovingly about changing fashion and men's clothing in the workforce. She noted, "The thing that irks me most about men is the fads they come up with. The most recent in planning is the shoestring ties." Shoestring ties were popularized by the proliferation of Western movies during the 1950s. Gary Cooper won an Oscar for playing the shoestring-wearing marshall Will Kane in the 1952 hit *High Noon*, "The story of a man who was too proud to run." Marilyn Riggs did not care for the trend in neckwear, suggesting, "They are all right in the movies on Gary Cooper, but who in planning looks like Cooper." Although the column did not provide Riggs' occupation, the authors noted that one of her favorite pastimes was going to the movies. This observation may help to explain her critique of men at Grumman who tried to model themselves after the Hollywood style masculinity of Gary Cooper. Ironically, the fact

that some of her coworkers were quick to adopt a symbol of rugged, noble masculinity suggested a lack of independence and manliness to Riggs.

A second respondent, Jacqueline (Jackie) F. Burdon, was more circumspect with her remarks about irritating men in the workplace, but also went on to register a note of displeasure with her domestic situation. Burdon started off on a lighter note than Riggs, joking, “As I’ve only been married a short time, I refuse to answer this question on the grounds it will incriminate me.” Burdon’s quip about maintaining domestic harmony is revealing. The tension over control within the home, as well as other domestic conflicts, bubbled over into the pages of these company papers on numerous occasions. In fact, Burdon’s response did not actually address the question of men in the workplace. Indeed, the question the *Plane News* posed did not specify which men were being irksome – men at home, men at work, or both. But it is telling that Burdon began her response by noting that she was married. Despite the mock concerns about upsetting her spouse, Burdon added, “But certain irksome characteristics have been brought to my attention, one of which is failure to keep a promise. I find no excuse for this except absentmindedness.” Burdon was upset with her husband for not keeping his word. This remark revealed a great deal about her expectations regarding masculinity. Burdon wanted her husband to be honest and accountable, which relate closely to two of the characteristics that David Montgomery associates with respectable manhood: dignity and respectability.[67] Montgomery was referring specifically to manhood as it related to labor relations on the shop floor. I would suggest that this complexly bifurcated understanding of masculinity extended to the home as well, as evidenced by Burdon’s public chiding of her husband.

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[66] “You Can Quote Me,” *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 6 (March 12, 1953): 4.

Her attempt to get him to embrace respectable masculinity outside of work reflected Burdon's understanding of masculinity as being malleable.

The comments of another respondent revealed a similar understanding of manliness, chiding male coworkers who exhibited stereotypically rough male traits. Frances Mariscalo began, "An irksome trait in men is their showoffness. For instance, talking about themselves, places they've been, girls they've taken out." Mariscalo was critical of bravado, a trait that relates closely to Joshua Freeman's characterization of rough masculinity as "swaggering masculinity."[68] In this case, Mariscalo may have been talking about men at home or in the workplace. She added, "Also their failure of showing a woman they're with the respect and attention they deserve." Again, we see an example of a female worker attempting to influence men at Grumman to embrace respectable masculinity.

The fourth respondent to the question of irritating male traits was Diane Caples, who summed up the cultural bias faced by women like her. "Men always are thinking they're in the right. They think they can do what they please, and it is permissible. But let one of us girls do the same and the story changes." As we shall see in the next chapter, this was indeed one of the core understandings of masculinity in the corporate culture of Grumman – the men who worked there thought of themselves as rugged individuals, rule-breakers that did whatever was necessary to get a job done. As we have already seen, a woman who tried to bend or break rules was treated with less leniency than her male peers (such as Catherine O'Regan, the woman at the start of the chapter

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[67] David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 13.
[68] Joshua B. Freeman, "Hard Hats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1993), 732.

who was banished from the shop floor). Resigned to a social double standard that was reinforced through cultural representations, Caples concluded, "I'm afraid it's a man's world."

In summary, occupational categories at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry underwent dramatic transformations following World War II. They were divided on the basis of sex, with women performing supporting and/or clerical functions and men performing managerial and/or administration functions. This social division of labor performed important cultural work, too, reinforcing a sense of masculinity or femininity for the employees at all three companies. In addition, cultural mediums were used to help reinforce these changes. Company newspapers modeled appropriate male and female behavior for employees. In some instances, women actually used the pages of company newspapers like the *Grumman Plane News* to encourage male employees to embrace respectable manhood rather than rough masculinity. These comments were not limited to men in the workplace; they also encouraged some men to behave differently outside of work, too. These gendered tensions continued at home and subsequently found their way into the workplace.

Domestic Strife and Other Tensions over Gender Roles

Other primary sources from Grumman, Republic, and Sperry offer commentary on the separation of spheres for men and women following the war. Indeed, many of the visual representations and opinion pieces from employees offered commentary on multiple

levels – suggesting in some cases that women belonged at home while men belonged in the workplace, and offering the idea in others that men and women also had appropriate spheres to occupy within the workplace or the home. A number of sources openly depicted tension or conflict that emerged at home over issues of control and the maintenance of separate spheres. These sources suggest just how fragile the veneer of the 1950s as a "man's world" really was.

When given the opportunity, some male employees readily embraced the idea that the home should be the province of women. In another edition of "You can quote me," the *Plane News* asked four men from plant 10, "Who, in your opinion, should handle the family finances – the husband or the wife?"[69] The answers to this question offer intriguing confirmation of the idea of separate spheres. The first respondent noted that he was single, and so handled his own finances. However, if he could he would turn it over to his wife "to keep peace in the family. … however, getting back to the money, if she didn't manage it properly I'd want an explanation." The other three correspondents were all married and, perhaps surprisingly, all said the wife should be in charge of finances. One correspondent offered the following explanation: "Women are usually better with money. They have to run the home, do the shopping and pay the bills." Another stated, "The wife is more qualified because she knows prices and watches them more closely. A man wouldn't have the time nor the patience to shop around to get the best bargains." The idea that wives should handle the family finances might, at first glance, appear to complicate the idea of separate spheres, since this would have given these women some agency in making purchasing decisions. An editorial aside in another story about a Grummanite who won a contest lends credence to this interpretation. Carmen Dimarzo

won a television set in a company-sponsored lottery. Although Dimarzo already had one television set, he decided to keep the prize because it was a "nicer looking piece of furniture."[70] In response, the editors offered the following aside: "But then, there's Mrs. Dimarzo and the family to be considered and you married men know who really makes the decisions. Ain't it the truth?" Comments like this suggest that married women may have exerted a great deal of influence over their husbands.

However, an alternative reading of these comments reveals a different understanding of gendered roles within the home, one that is far less liberating. Given the gendered divisions within the workplace, which placed women in ancillary positions, the consensus among these Grummanites that women should be in charge of finances and purchasing decisions was not necessarily empowering. Rather, this practice furthered the demeaning of women's work. Even at home, men needed "clerical" support.

Many cartoons from the *Grumman Plane News* made explicit, joking references to domestic strife between husbands and wives. For example, figure 2.8 shows a couple in a kitchen doing dishes. The husband is drying as his wife washes. However, the man is shaking uncontrollably and a broken plate lies on the floor. Exasperated, the wife yells, "Henry, this is the end – it's me OR your rivet gun!"[71] In addition to playfully mocking this woman's protective instincts, this cartoon is notable for the way it also makes light of potentially hazardous workplace conditions.

[69] *Grumman Plane News* 8, no. 12 (June 9, 1948), 2.
[70] "'No Fooling!' TV Winner Queries," *Grumman Plane News* 9 no. 7 (March 31, 1950), 1.
[71] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 11 (May 24, 1951), 2.

Figure 2.8 “Henry, this is the end – it’s me OR your rivet gun!”

Another example of gendered domestic strife also comes courtesy of Fred Dresch. Figure 2.9 displays a piece in which a tearful wife is ready to walk out the door on her husband who cannot tear himself away from a blonde woman on the television. Desperate, wearing her coat and with suitcase in hand, she pleads, “For the last time – put Kukla, Fran and Ollie on!”[72] *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* was a television show that ran from 1947-1957. The show featured puppets and was marketed as family fare, but also developed a large adult audience because the humor relied on wit rather than slapstick. Regardless, in this fictional encounter between a married couple, the husband had no interest in watching family entertainment. As these cartoons illustrate, even when pictured in their rightful sphere, women were clearly not in control of their lives.

[72] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 9, no 6 (March 16, 1950), 2.

Figure 2.9 "For the last time – put Kukla, Fran and Ollie on!"

Examples like the ones above seem to give a mixed picture of who was in charge where. Were men really in charge in the workplace? Were women really in charge at home? Did the truth lie somewhere in between? In an attempt to resolve this ambiguity, many cartoonists from the company newspapers tried to reinforce the bifurcation of work as male and home as female through jokes about women interjecting their authority into the workplace. One cartoon features someone with a tie and label of "boss" on his shirt pocket turning to another man in a smock (a mechanic, one would presume). The "boss" is holding a phone in his hand and saying, "Marvin, my wife wants to know if you're going to ask me for a raise?"[73] Fascinatingly, figure 2.9 and the "Marvin" comic were both produced by Fred Dresch, yet they seem to offer conflicting interpretations of the influence women had over their husbands lives (both at work and at home). One features

[73] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 4 (Feb 12, 1953), 2. In fact, cartoonists editorialized about the blurring of female roles outside the workplace in other ways, too. For example, *Grumman Plane News* 17, no. 7 (April 4, 1958), 8 offers a cartoon of two women. One has a purse, the other has a filing cabinet on a hand truck. The one with the filing cabinet says, "My purse became simply inadequate!" This illustration was provided by the Cartoons-of-the-month company.

a woman who is powerless to influence her husband's leisure habits, while the other features a male supervisor who is powerless to say no to his employees without prodding from his wife.[74]

These cartoons were sometimes quite explicit in questioning the masculinity of male employees who let their wives influence their professional lives. One example of this comes from the comic strip "Lum Grum," a series that ran in the *Grumman Plane News* during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The creator was George Re, who actually worked on the shop floor. "Lum Grum" was the name of the main character that Re used in his cartoons – Lum was intended to be a composite of the typical shop floor Grummanite. The figure of "Lum Grum" presents a fascinating running commentary on just how complex gender relations were at this particular defense contractor. One cartoon in particular (figure 2.10) features the character of Lum asking his supervisor, "My wife says I should ask you for a pay raise."[75] The manager responds, "OK. I'll ask my wife if I can give you one." In this instance, the artist mocks the figure of Lum on two levels – the illustration depicts Lum Grum (the representative Grummanite) as unmanly for allowing his wife to dictate his behavior at work. This mockery is also located centrally in the cartoon itself, in the form of the supervisor's facetious response.

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[74] Still other cartoons were pure fantasy pieces, not situated within the workplace or at home. One of the early cartoons that Fred Dresch prepared for the *Plane News* featured two men looking out through the windows of a cockpit (the viewer's perspective is behind them in the cockpit). They are looking out at an underwater scene, the highlight of which is two topless mermaids. One turns to the other and says "Rawther a pleasant crack up, eh what?" *Grumman Plane News* 7, no 17 (Sep 1, 1948): 2

[75] *Grumman Plane News* 10, no. 10 (May 10, 1951), 3.

Figure 2.10

An important aspect of these cartoons is their utilization of female figures to defuse serious work issues. In both of these instances, important workplace issues such as pay and hazards are depicted in a jocular style. Significantly, these images are all drawn from the pages of Grumman's newspaper. As noted previously, Grumman was the only company under study that remained nonunionized. Not coincidentally, the corporate culture at Grumman featured more emphasis on manliness and rough masculinity. These images sent the message quite clearly that, at Grumman at least, any male employee who tried to address the issues of safety or pay in a serious (not to say organized?) manner was risking his masculinity.

The sometimes-contentious relations between men and women in the home were often a source for humor in the workplace, and also reveal a great deal about gendered assumptions regarding appropriate work roles. The question of who should handle household finances illustrates the way that male employees thought about gender roles in the home and workplace. In either setting, women's work should consist of providing support for their male coworkers or spouses. These jokes and cartoons were primarily directed at male readers as a means of challenging or reinforcing their manly identities,

which even impacted attempts at unionizing workers at Grumman. The next section will examine efforts to organize the workers at Republic.

The IAM Organizes Workers and Wrestles with Masculinity

During the mid to late 1940s, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) staged a long, patient, savvy, and ultimately successful campaign to organize workers at the Republic Aviation Corporation. The campaign overcame significant obstacles, including an opposing drive by management, competition from other unions, and strong anti-labor sentiment among Republic employees, culminating in a successful NLRB election in November 1950. The majority of the IAM's arguments focused on bread-and-butter economic issues such as pay rates and job classifications, but significantly, the union's appeals to workers also contained a mixture of fascinating messages that combined notions of gender and class. A series of songs, poems, and cartoons demonstrate the important role that gender played for workers at Republic. In particular, the IAM needed to counter the culture of maverick masculinity at Republic. In order to achieve this, union organizers needed to respond to the fiercely independent masculinity that was prevalent among Racers on the shop floor.[76]

As discussed previously, the IAM's earliest attempts to organize the workers at Republic and the surrounding aircraft manufacturers occurred during the war. However,

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[76] The term "Racer" (or, alternatively, "RACer") was a label commonly used by the company and workers to describe employees of Republic. The company newspaper explained the term thus: "'What is a Racer?' A Racer is anyone who works for Republic. The names works out this way: 'R' is for Republic; 'A' is for

the timing of these efforts did not favor the IAM. In a 1943 report to IAM Vice President S.L. Newman, Grand Lodge Representative Adam Yockel complained that the UAW-CIO already had an office in the area and was staging an active campaign at both the Republic and Grumman plants. The chief IAM organizer, John Lynch, although a "capable man," was "having a difficult time getting the men to attend a group meeting," which seemed to be a clear indication that Racers lacked interest. As outlined in the previous chapter, the UAW was also gaining support on the strength of an NLRB ruling that barred Republic from firing workers engaged in organizing efforts. Yockel decided that the situation was no longer worth pursuing. "If we enter the campaign at Republic, and lose, we also will be out of the race in other aircraft plants in the territory."[77] After further discussions, IAM executives concurred with Yockel, concluding that "the launching of an organizing drive in the aircraft section of Long Island be held in abeyance until a more favorable opportunity presents itself."[78] This watchful position was an early indicator of just how patient the IAM was willing to be in attempting to organize Long Island workers (and just how important Republic was to this plan). Ultimately, the UAW was unsuccessful in organizing Republic employees during the war, which left the door open for a later IAM initiative.

In 1946 the IAM brought in a new Grand Lodge Representative, Martin Buckley, to help recruit workers on Long Island. Buckley was a pivotal and controversial figure in the history of the IAM in the suburbs of New York. By 1948, Buckley and his fellow organizers believed that the time was right to initiate an IAM election at Republic. The

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Aviation; 'C' is for Corporation – and 'er' is used as in 'worker'. Hence 'Racer'." See "What is a Racer?" *Republic Aviation News* 30, no. 9 (January 25, 1952): 11.

[77] Letter from Adam F. Yockel to S.L. Newman dated May 30, 1943, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 367/2.

union had already experienced some small successes in the area, organizing workers at Liberty Aircraft in January 1948.[79] Based on the recommendation of General Vice President Newman (and the fact that 1,500 authorization cards had already been obtained from the 6,000 Republic employees), the IAM's executive council agreed to hire two more organizers to assist in the Long Island organizing campaign in March 1948.[80] IAM organizers on the ground in New York and executives in Washington both agreed that the employees at Republic were critical to the union's plans. Joseph Mastriani, the successful, Italian-speaking recruiter from chapter one, worried that the UAW was once again attempting to recruit Racers. He noted, "Winning the election at Republic is a must in our program on Long Island."[81]

In addition to the competition from the UAW, IAM organizers had to overcome other significant obstacles, such as the anti-union sentiment of the locals who were employed at Republic. In an internal report, Publicity Representative Marvin J. Miller quoted Martin Buckley:

> The type of people employed in the plants of Long Island differ considerably from the people found forty miles west in the vicinity of Greater New York. For years they have been subjected to anti-labor influences through Republican Clubs, veterans organizations and the Long Island press. Upon investigation I found these people were firm believers in bargaining for themselves and if this were not successful, they were proud of being able to quit and seek employment elsewhere.[82]

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[78] Letter from Eric Peterson to Adam F. Yockel dated July 28, 1943, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 367/2.

[79] Letter from Marvin J. Miller to Mr. Gordon Cole dated January 23, 1948, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339. Even this small victory took considerable effort and patience. Martin Buckley first contacted workers at Liberty in December 1946.

[80] Report titled "Organizing Program Long Island, New York," stamped March 1948, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[81] Letter from Joseph Mastriani to S.L. Newman dated July 9, 1948, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[82] Letter from Marvin J. Miller to Mr. Gordon Cole dated January 23, 1948, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339.

Of course, people who worked in the aircraft industry on Long Island were in an unusual situation with regard to job security. As a result of the large number of manufacturers in the area and the resulting intense demand for labor, employees could simply move from one employer to another when they became disgruntled. In fact, the IAM had capitalized on this pattern during their organization drive at Liberty Aircraft. Rank-and-file union members from Lockheed Aircraft (another manufacturer based in Sayville, Long Island, which the IAM successfully unionized in 1946) who had formerly worked at Republic, Grumman, and other plants on Long Island, helped hand out literature at the gates of Liberty during the organizing drive. "This furnished an opportunity for the Liberty people to talk to men they knew and had worked with and obtain information about the differences between working in a non-union plant and an IAM plant."[83] The union duplicated this tactic at Republic, utilizing members from other companies to provide models of union masculinity for Racers.

We can already see two related, gendered aspects to the work that the IAM had to confront in organizing Republic employees. In the most straightforward feature, as we saw in chapter one, most of the employees were male. Miller's reference to potential recruits speaking with "men" they knew was not figurative, but literal. The preponderance of male employees points to the second, subtler role that gender played in this process. The workplace was an important site of male identity formation for these workers. In the case of Racers, this included asserting a particular type of rugged, defiant masculinity. Buckley was struck by the phenomenon of workers that insisted on being able to fend for themselves. If their negotiations with one employer proved unsuccessful,

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[83] Ibid.

these workers took pride in being able to quit and move on to the next company. This sort of maverick independence initially proved to be a formidable obstacle in organizing efforts.[84]

Of course, the IAM was also hampered by Republic's determined anti-union campaign throughout this period. During the build-up to the first IAM election in 1948, Republic granted generous wage increases to all employees to counter the union's economic arguments. But even this seemingly liberal measure betrayed a cynical calculation: management gave an increase of 30 cents per hour for shop workers (who were being recruited by the IAM), but only 20 cents for office and technical employees (who were not the subject of a unionization drive). In addition to the pay raise, the company gave one week of pay as a Christmas bonus, and granted workers two weeks vacation after one year of employment.[85]

Faced with the obstacles of entrenched anti-labor attitudes among workers and anti-union campaigns from management, the IAM still needed to remain patient in the years following World War II, even as shifting labor markets and organizing efforts generated increasing support for the union. On the strength of the 1,500 authorization cards from Racers mentioned above, the NLRB held an election at Republic on September 23, 1948. The IAM lost a bitter and closely divided contest. The initial tally indicated that the union had lost by the slim margin of 94 votes (1,530 votes against the IAM, 1,436 in favor), or less than 10 percent.[86] However, a questionable recount

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[84] In the case of Republic, the predominantly male workforce did not abandon the strategy of simply relocating when dissatisfied until the labor market became saturated in the late 1940s, which shifted the upper hand in labor relations quite dramatically to the company.

[85] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. Hal Shean dated January 24, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[86] Republic's own company newspaper crowed, "Racers Reject Union in Plant Election." See "Racers Reject Union in Plant Election," *Republic Aviation News* 26, no. 4 (October 21, 1949): 3.

increased the margin of defeat to 692. Despite an appeal to the regional NLRB and threats of further legal action, the IAM was unsuccessful in challenging the election results.[87]

The company's victory in the 1948 election may have lulled management into a false sense of security, which resulted in a quick rise in fortune for the IAM. Determined, Buckley and IAM Vice-President S.L. Newman decided to carry on the campaign despite the setback. In a letter to the editor of the *Machinists* (an IAM publication that was often used as a recruiting tool during organization drives) written just months after the failed September election, Martin Buckley requested that the special Republic-edition of the *Machinists* continue to be printed. However, anticipating a huge and imminent lay-off at Republic, Buckley noted that 5,000 copies of the paper would be sufficient. He continued, "Immediately following the Company's receipt of the Board's order [confirming the IAM loss], they have again become very cocky violating every rule in the book."[88] In an interesting turn of events, the rough masculinity implicit in the capricious management style at Republic had begun to deeply undermine that of the workers. In a significant change of affairs, Buckley finally succeeded in getting Republic

[87] NLRB, Second Region, case no. 2-RC-502, "Report on Objections," Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987). Rather than feel defeated, some other observers took heart from the close election of 1948. In a flier that optimistically declared, "We've just begun to fight!" the Republic Workers for Wallace Committee pointed out that the results for this election were much closer than the previous election, when the UAW lost by a two-to-one margin. This demonstrates that "union sentiment is GROWING in Republic." Interestingly, this flier also promotes the classic union-style masculinity, which emphasized brotherhood and fraternity. The author enthuses that the union must "dig in" in the shop and continue organizing. "The whole drive should be imbued with the spirit of the old slogan, 'An injury to one is an injury to all' especially so when an active union man is involved. 1,436 men acting TOGETHER can protect a guy's job, settle grievances, and discourage back breaking speed-up." See flier entitled "We've just begun to fight," stamped October 4, 1948, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[88] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. Jack Burns dated March 17, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339.

employees to help with distributing literature and the *Machinists* at the plant gates. He concluded hopefully, "This may be the break we need."

IAM organizers wasted little time in renewing their efforts to recruit Racers. Between March and May 1949, they began circulating fliers that accused Republic management of returning to their old tactics of lay-offs, pay cuts, and rehiring people for less pay than other employers in the region. One such flier concluded, "If you have learned by now that Union protection of your job is the only method of obtaining a fair deal, it's absolutely necessary that you sign an authorization card."[89] The use of the word "fair" in this flier nicely hints at the way that IAM organizers countered the rough style of management that was undermining the rough masculinity of shop floor workers. Instead, the IAM cleverly suggested that blue collar Racers cultivate a respectable style of masculinity for themselves, one founded on traditions of fraternity and brotherhood.

By June 1949, the rough actions of the company (in combination with the efforts of the union) appeared to be swinging opinion in favor of the IAM. Buckley reported that at a recent Republic organizing committee meeting:

> I was advised that large numbers of those employees [at Republic] who voted against the Union are now convinced that to obtain a stable wage rate and security they must obtain a signed Union Agreement. Further proof of this, recently, has been, Tool & Die makers and Jig Builders who admittedly voted against us in the last election have walked into our office requesting to sign authorization cards.[90]

Despite the natural antipathy that workers at Republic held toward unions, the patient, persistent campaign of the IAM appeared to be winning them over.

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[89] Flier, stamped May 19 1949, with hand note, "distributed at Republic on 5/5/49," Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339. See also flier "distributed at Republic on 3/18/49," Ibid.
[90] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. S. L. Newman dated June 29, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

Yet, just when the Republic campaign appeared to be running smoothly, the IAM was confronted with yet another obstacle – a competing organization drive from a rival union. Once again, the UAW became active at the company's gates, distributing literature and attempting to generate authorization cards of their own. Buckley wrote to Vice-President Newman in May 1949, warning him that the UAW-CIO was gearing up for another push at Republic that coincided with Buckley's plans.[91] Obviously, this represented a serious threat. Newman took the matter to A. J. Hayes, International President of the IAM, requesting more equipment and personnel to help distribute literature and recruit new members.[92] The situation at Farmingdale soon grew so alarming that Newman sent another urgent request to Hayes asking for authorization to hire another full-time organizer. By this time, the UAW had four full-time representatives at Republic. Newman noted tactfully that these representatives were better financed than his own people in the field.[93] Even more troubling, these were the same UAW organizers that had just completed a successful campaign at Chance-Vought in Prairie City, Texas, defeating the IAM in the process.[94]

Despite the gravity of the situation at Republic, the IAM continued its policy of patient, savvy planning. Newman noted that they were already in a position to petition the NLRB for another election. However, the Vice President continued that he and the

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[91] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. S. L. Newman dated May 3, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[92] Letter from S. L. Newman to Mr. A. J. Hayes dated November 2, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339.

[93] Letter from S. L. Newman to Mr. A. J. Hayes dated February 14, 1950, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987). Newman noted that the UAW agents were paying $100 a month to rent a two-room office in Farmingdale itself. The IAM had deemed this price too high and settled for more humble accommodations in nearby Amityville.

[94] Hayes was persuaded by Newman's arguments, and appointed Arthur Carey as a Special Organizer in the Republic campaign. Carey had previously been a Business Representative for the IAM local at Lockheed. Prior to that, he had been a shop foreman, experience that Newman and Buckley judged invaluable in

other organizers were "using a little strategy before petitioning the Board because of the information we have now that there is a possibility that the plant may lay off some 2000 workers [within the next month]." Despite the threat from the UAW, Newman judged that the potential boost in IAM support that the layoff would produce was worth the risk. Once again, the union's strategy contained two implicitly gendered elements. In the most explicit way, the company was on the verge of firing 2,000 workers, the vast majority of whom would be men. This related to the second gendered impact of the layoff – the remaining male workers would witness the emasculation of their former coworkers as the direct result of the seemingly capricious actions of the company. This would further help IAM organizers in overcoming the problem of rough, individualistic masculinity that Buckley had noted previously. In his letter to Hayes, Newman concluded, "If it wasn't for [the layoff] we would petition the Board at once."

Newman's strategy worked. Republic did indeed lay off a substantial number of workers, creating a great deal of anxiety and frustration within the workforce. Workers were tired of having their mutually constitutive class and gender identities undermined by the seemingly whimsical twists of managerial decisions. In addition, the UAW was not able to generate enough interest to pose a serious threat to the IAM. When the Machinists petitioned the NLRB for another election in 1950, the UAW was unable to get on the ballot.

The IAM's second drive for a NLRB election at Republic contained a new development and was unusual because it directly addressed the "masculinity roadblock" that had hampered the previous effort. During the second campaign, IAM organizers

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helping organize Racers. See letter from A. J. Hayes to Mr. Arthur G. Carey dated March 20, 1950, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 339.

reiterated the compelling economic reasons for unionizing (job security, pay increases, etc.). These economic arguments already contained a gender component. The second organizing drive was remarkable because the union also addressed the gendered component of defiantly independent masculinity more explicitly. A series of fliers distributed at the gates of Republic between March and September 1950 reveal that IAM organizers attempted to reframe union membership as a positive reflection of masculinity.

The first flier combined economic and gender considerations in an attempt to persuade Republic employees of the importance of organizing. The handout (Figure 2.11) features a cartoon with a dire depiction of labor relations at Republic. A corpulent businessman in a three-piece suit (and labeled "REPUBLIC") represents the company's management, while a working-class man in pants and rolled up shirt sleeves (and labeled "RACER") represents workers.[95] These were common themes in literature that the IAM distributed at the gates of Republic. In this particular cartoon, the representative Racer is on his knees, with his hands and feet bound. His hands are tied behind his back, forcing him to expose his head and neck as he leans forward. The representative businessman looms over the Racer with a gigantic knife raised above his head. The blade is labeled "SAME OLD KNIFE," which is also the opening line of the flier. The cartoon's symbolism operates on two levels. Perhaps most obviously, the physical relationship of the company and the employee evoke an execution by beheading. By laying-off workers, the company is economically murdering them. On a second level, this cartoon provides a brilliant synthesis of class and gender anxieties, symbolically drawing the connection

[95] "Diagnosis: Same old knife," flier labeled "distributed at Republic 3/29/50" and stamped Apr 4, 1950, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

between layoffs and castration. In this meaning, the loss of a job is connected literally to the loss of the Racer's head (and, therefore, his masculinity).

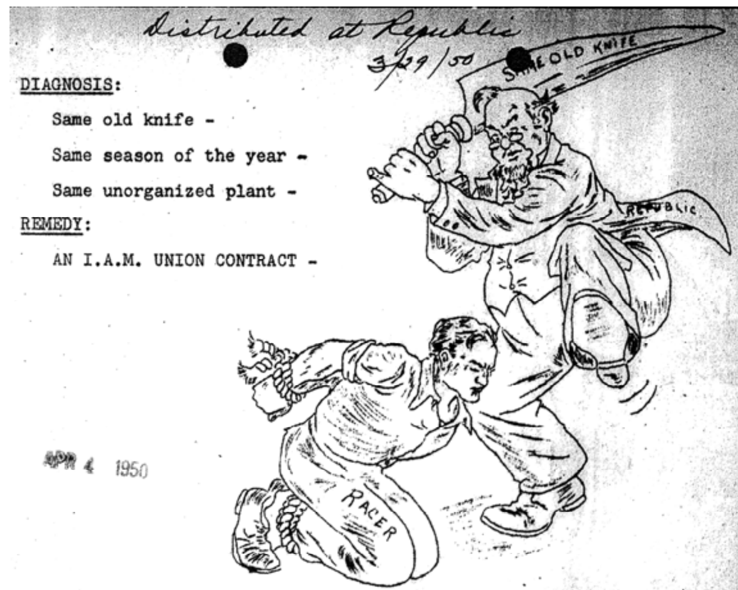

Figure 2.11 "Same Old Knife"

The accompanying poem takes direct aim at the culture of masculinity that dominated the Republic workforce. Drawing a compelling connection to the personal and cultural links many Racers had with the military, the opening verse reads:

> Remember the tough guy
> The young G.I.
> Who'd cuss 'n swear,
> Steal and lie?
> He knew no fear
> Never bent a knee;
> Laughed at the Padre
> 'N you and me.
> He needed a buddy
> Like a hole in the head.
> He could shift for himself-
> At least so he said.

The opening stanza offers an explicit critique of the kind of masculinity that was frequently on display at workplaces like Republic. The author takes direct aim at the rough tradition of masculinity (embodied by the actions "cuss 'n swear," as well as the references to this man as being fearless to the point of foolhardiness), going so far as to suggest that these men lacked scruples (the G.I. would even "Steal and lie," and laughed at religious figures like the "Padre").

The poet implies these were the traits of an immature man ("The young G.I.") and the second stanza describes how our protagonist was transformed by his experiences in the war:

> He quivered and shook
> When things got bad;
> He looked for a Buddy-
> There were none to be had.
> Then he pictured himself
> Fighting all alone;
> Praying to God,
> He'd get back home.
> He learned a lesson-
> This tough G.I.;
> He's back on Long Island,
> A real nice guy.

This section of the poem completes the characterization of the formerly fiercely independent youth as actually being a vulnerable and all-too-human figure. Shaken by his experiences overseas, our young G.I. even finds faith ("Praying to God"), and returns home to Long Island with an appreciation for the hard lesson that he could not always "shift for himself." This fascinating piece of organizing literature reveals a great deal about the competing cultural considerations that were in play during the IAM's organizing drive at Republic. The union found itself needing to discredit the kind of

rough masculine culture that was common among workers at Republic, and attempting to advocate respectable masculinity in its place.

A second flier continues the gendered themes, while reflecting Newman's strategy of waiting until Republic had laid off workers to push for the NLRB vote. A series of four illustrations shows two Racers having a conversation as they clock in to work. The first man addresses the second, "Hello Mike, Did ya hear anything about the lay-off down in your shop?"[96] The second man replies, "Well, not exactly, Dan, but a lot of guys have been shifted already and that's usually a sure sign." Unfortunately, the cartoonist that created this strip is anonymous. Clearly, however, they were actively promoting Newman's strategy of trying to capitalize on the periodic lay-offs at Republic, an argument that resonated with workers.

The conversation between Mike and Dan continues, with both workers fretting about the uncertainty of working for a company that has no seniority system and frequent lay-offs. Mike tries to assure his coworker, "What'a ya worried about Dan? You've been here quite awhile so you ought to be pretty safe." Dan retorts: "Are you kidding? Imagine the answer you'd get asking about a lay-off when you can't find out why you didn't get a raise." Clearly, the IAM was attempting to depict the Republic workplace as a precarious, arbitrary environment where even workers with time and experience felt alienated and insecure. Several IAM fliers, as well as the correspondence cited earlier,

[96] "Hello Mike, Did ya hear…" flier distributed at Republic, n.d., Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987). This flier is next to the flier discussed in note 96: "Diagnosis: Same old knife," flier labeled "distributed at Republic 3/29/50" and stamped Apr 4, 1950, which may explain why it is not labeled or date stamped. These fliers may have been distributed at the same time, or quite close together.

make note of the high-handed style of Republic's management, which was (according to the IAM) the underlying cause of this insecurity among Racers.[97]

In response, the IAM also offers itself (in this cartoon and elsewhere) as the solution to the morale problem at Republic. Significantly, the cartoon argues for the importance of IAM membership in a way that turns on the masculinity and gender considerations that Buckley and Newman identified as so problematic among Racers. Mike tells Dan that "The only way to clean this up is by voting for the IAM." Moving forward in time, the next panel has Dan returning to Mike with a piece of paper in his hand: an IAM contract, complete with provisions about lay-off procedures, seniority, grievance procedures, and vacations. Drawing a clear connection to the angst that affected workers, he concludes, "With something like this, we'd know where we stand – no more sweating it out."

While the gendered themes of this fictional conversation may have been implicit to this point (emphasizing personal control of workplace conditions for male employees), the final panel makes the IAM's attempt to reframe what masculinity meant quite explicit. Mike concludes, "That looks like a good deal Dan … It's so nice to have a man around the house, but one of the things that makes him nice is a good steady job." This fascinating observation is the perfect compliment to the first flier discussed above. Where the first flier sought to problematize the kind of rough, rugged masculinity that was on display at Republic, this second flier offered a positive assessment of the kind of

[97] If the IAM were the only source for this assertion, their representation of the workplace would certainly be open to question. However, several oral histories also refer to management as high-handed and inflexible. William Wait and Donald Riehl explicitly referred to this as a problem. In addition, Merven Mandel and Michael Hlinko described the problems that arose from internal conflicts between various levels of management, which also left workers feeling extremely disconnected and had a very negative impact on employee morale. These accounts will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, but they

responsible, community-minded masculinity that the IAM hoped would win workers over. The flier was advocating union membership as an expression of respectable masculinity that would enable male workers to fill their assumed gender role of breadwinner within a family unit. The flier demonstrates how ardently and persistently the IAM had to work on the problem of reframing masculinity among Racers' minds.

The IAM distributed other fliers to further unsettle the type of rough masculinity that was popular at Republic. One piece of literature featured two images of Republic's management, again portrayed as a portly, older businessman. In the first image, the businessman gleefully breaks a stick and tosses it onto a pile of other broken sticks labeled "DIVIDED RACERS."[98] The sticks are actually oversized matchsticks, and the cartoon phosphorous on the end gives the pieces of wood a certain phallic quality (once again, a subtle reference to the emasculating effect of the company on male workers). The accompanying text makes the meaning of the image clear:

> The picture above tells the Republic story;
> It shows the old boy right in his glory,
> Picking you off easily, one by one,
> See his big smile? – he thinks it's fun.
> Alone you're whipped; you haven't a chance –
> You'll lose your shirt and maybe your pants.

The message is clear – insisting on dealing with management by yourself is a sure recipe for economic disaster and further emasculation. What is the solution to this problematic relationship with Republic management, founded in part on the defiantly individualistic

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are worth mentioning here as well for the support that they lend to the IAM's characterization of working conditions at Republic.

[98] Flier, n.d., Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987). Given the dates on other fliers before and after this piece of literature, it was likely distributed sometime between July and September 1950.

masculinity of Racers? The flier answers this implied question with a second cartoon of the “Big Capitalist” Republic, now trying vainly to break a whole set of oversized matchsticks that have been bundled together. The matchsticks are tied with a large banner that reads “I.A.M. LODGE AT REPUBLIC.” The only way to stop Republic from exploiting workers individually is to unite under a collective bargaining agreement. Gender operates on several different levels in this flier, and reveals quite a bit about the savviness of the IAM organizers. The emasculating characterization of the corporation as an elderly, overweight man provides further evidence that union organizers at Republic were consciously playing with different understandings of masculinity, attempting to reframe the way that Racers thought about themselves and the company where they worked.

Other literature distributed during the 1950 organizing drive also demonstrated the efforts of IAM organizers to counter rugged, specific masculinity. One flier produced late in the campaign elaborated on this subject by again deploying military themes. The “Big Capitalist” representation of Republic is pictured atop an Army tank. A Racer walks unwittingly before the tank. Wearing dark sunglasses and shining a flashlight on the ground, the deluded worker tries to reassure himself “I don’t need a union ... I can take care of myself!”[99] Again, this piece of literature takes direct aim at the fiercely independent, individualized version of masculinity that Martin Buckley complained about among Long Island workers (and Republic employees particularly). In this flier the cartoonist makes the point that the cost for maintaining this form of masculinity is too high.

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[99] “You’ve all seen the boss’s heavy tanks,” flier, hand labeled “9/19/50” and stamped “SEP 23 1950,” Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

Finally, the IAM's organizational efforts, utilizing arguments that addressed both economic and cultural issues, combined with the morale-damaging effect of layoffs, resulted in a successful election for the union in November 1950. The vote was still razor close, with 1,778 Racers (or 50.5%) supporting the IAM, and 1,717 voting "No Union" (or 48.7%).[100] Faced with the election results, Republic's President and General Manager, Mundy I. Peale, posted the following concession on bulletin boards: "Inasmuch as you have chosen the IAM to represent you in a democratic manner let's all pitch in and let's make this the best IAM shop in the business. Now that the IAM has won this election fairly and squarely I expect everyone to cooperate fully under these new circumstances."[101] The union's senior vice-president on the Republic campaign, Fred Coonley, wondered if this statement represented a hopeful sign. He wrote to President Hayes, "The above quote could very well be the basis of building up a sound and friendly contractual relationship with this company which, of course, will be our objective."

Unfortunately for the IAM, the situation at Republic never did settle down and produce a stable, productive Lodge that could spearhead a larger Long Island organizing campaign. Later chapters of the dissertation will explore the internal divisions and external pressures that kept this particular Local in a seemingly perpetual state of dysfunction. As we have already seen, however, part of the problem stemmed from the cultural bias against unions that was so strong among the Long Islanders employed at Republic's plants, including the kind of rugged masculinity that continued to hamper the IAM and other unions at Grumman.

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[100] Letter from Fred H. Coonley to Mr. A.J. Hayes dated November 3, 1950, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340 (Local 1987). 28 of the ballots were challenged, which is the reason why the percentages of "IAM" and "No Union" votes do not add up to an even 100 percent.
[101] Ibid.

In fact, IAM leadership was concerned about the anti-union bias still reflected in the closeness of the vote in November 1950. Attempting to relieve these concerns, Coonley assured Hayes, "While the vote in this election was very close I do not believe it reflects too great antagonism on the part of those who voted against the union inasmuch as many of them are new employees whom we have not had the opportunity to convert into the spirit of unionism."[102] The IAM did indeed set about vigorously attempting to convert recent hires to the spirit of unionism. These efforts also proved problematic, leading to a bitter division within the union and a wildcat strike shortly thereafter. For the moment, however, IAM organizers in Farmingdale and New York remained optimistic that they had won an important victory in their campaign to unionize Long Island aviation workers.

In conclusion, gender played an important and changing role in the identity formation of workers for all of the companies following World War II. Femininity was reframed from independent to reliant, evoking complex responses from the women who were affected. The importance of fashion, for example, reveals an interesting and complex mingling of gender and class elements in defining femininity for the women workers examined here. Masculinity also took on new importance as these workplaces were reclaimed as important sites of identity formation for male workers. A variety of sources illustrate the way that the notion of "separate spheres" (with women at home and men in control of the workplace) was asserted in the wake of WW II. The reassertion of a rough masculine culture by employees such as Racers and Grummanites also proved problematic for unions as they attempted to organize these workers. The particular kind of fiercely independent masculinity that prevailed at these companies was antithetical (in

[102] Ibid.

workers' minds, at least) to the very idea of unionism, a problem that the IAM struggled with at Republic. The next chapter will follow the further troubles of the IAM at Republic and examine the impact of gender on the organizational attempts of unions at Grumman, the one company under study that never unionized.

Chapter 3: "Pay Attention and Learn." Redefining Masculinity in the Post-War Years

Introduction

Former employees recounted stories that frequently shed light on the way broad historical forces shaped their lives. Often, these narratives personalized potentially abstract categories such as gender, class, or race quite nicely. One story from a retired Grummanite illustrates the way that people influenced one another regarding gender norms:

> Grumman, large as it was, was bound to have a few characters. I knew one. His name was Jeff Norris … Shortly after we had moved into Plant 25, right after it opened, Jeff moved his desk right on the side of a busy aisle. I said "Jeff, that will be awfully distracting," and he smiled and said "yes!" Jeff was a bachelor and admirer of the finer things that make up a successful bachelor's life. … Grumman had a lot of pretty women and most of them walked down that aisle at coffee break. One day, just prior to coffee break, Jeff took a roll of bills out of his pocket and began assorting them in piles, first $100s then $50s and $20s. I said, "Jeff what are you doing?" He said, "trolling." … "What do you mean by trolling?" "Pay attention and learn" he responded. No sooner had he stopped speaking when a very cute little chippy stopped at his desk with stars in her eyes. And Jeff turned around and looked at me with a grin that explained it all and said "I got one."[1]

This story illustrates several aspects of gender norms operating in this workplace, particularly the way that white-collar masculinity changed following World War II. Norris was very likely an engineer, because he had a desk in an open space that bordered on an aisle. During this period, most engineers in aircraft companies lacked individual

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[1] Anonymous, *Grumman Retiree Club, Inc. of Northrop Grumman Corp. Newsletter* 36, no. 4 (April 2003): 12. Copy in possession of author. I have changed the name of this individual to Jeff Norris.

offices, instead sitting at separate drafting boards in large, common areas. The woman's occupation is harder to gauge, but given that the company relocated most women to ancillary roles by the 1950s, she was likely a secretary or clerk. Norris's behavior in this story illustrates a performative, interpersonal aspect of gender. As discussed in the previous chapter, gender identity contains a strong performative element – people act out gender roles for one another, thus establishing or reinforcing their identity for both themselves and others. In this story, Norris's actions were performance-based in two respects. First, he was demonstrating his masculinity to female coworkers as they passed by (in the form of income and, by extension, the ability to provide economic security, a significant point considering that the woman in question probably did not earn a substantial salary). Second, Norris was also proving his gender to other male engineers. In fact, this latter aspect was the true point of the story, which centered on the connection between the narrator and Norris as Norris introduced him to the (perhaps surprisingly) hypermasculine world of white-collar masculinity at Grumman. Drawing an explicit connection between meeting women and sport fishing, the engineer dropped money as bait to attract women.

This chapter examines the way that gender identities changed as workers (frequently collaborating with managers) attempted to recreate separate spheres and distinct gender roles during the late 1940s and 1950s. In particular, the defining characteristics of masculinity changed for white- and blue-collar workers. As illustrated in the story of Jeff Norris, white-collar men at all three companies, but Grumman in particular, embraced a much rougher, more demonstrative style of masculinity over the course of the 1950s. This shift in white-collar masculinity occurred in response to class

tensions within the workplace. Engineers and mechanics frequently mocked each other's manliness, prompting some engineers to prove their masculinity zealously to their coworkers, including women. Masculinity changed for blue-collar men, too. Representations of working-class men transitioned from humorous, eclectic examinations of gender norms (including multiple instances of playful cross-dressing) to depictions of male bodies that emphasized physical power and prowess. Many workers embraced these changes, while some others responded ambivalently or even critically.

The final section of the chapter examines the way that these competing gender identities hampered the effectiveness of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) at Republic during the early 1950s. Immediately after winning the right to bargain on behalf of Racers, IAM Local 1987 was embroiled in a protracted power struggle that seriously damaged worker morale and hampered the organization's efficiency. This competition for control of the union was about power, but it featured gender themes as well – one of the underlying arguments related to the impact that the union's presence might have on gender roles in the workplace. In an attempt to discredit one another, both sides in the power struggle attempted to play on worker anxieties about the changing nature of masculine and feminine roles.

From Hypo to Hyper: Changes in White-Color Masculinity, 1940s to early 1950s

The workplaces of Grumman, Republic, and Sperry altered dramatically in the wake of World War II. In particular, workers (often aided by management) reclaimed the shop

floor as an important masculine space. However, masculinity was not one, homogeneous trait in all of these settings. Different types of masculinity competed among different sets of workers at different points in time. Shop floor mechanics often embraced a rougher form of masculinity, while engineers and other white-collar employees frequently displayed a more respectable style of manliness. As we saw in the example of the IAM's organizing drive at Republic, these different types of masculinity could even compete with one another in the same setting. Likewise, different sets of class and gender tensions between male workers were evident at all three of the companies under study. As increasingly large numbers of engineers entered these workplaces following WW II, engineers and mechanics engaged in a war of words (and pictures, and cartoons) over whose version of class-bound masculinity was superior.

Employers like Grumman placed a high premium on engineers. As mentioned previously, the company did not lay off a single engineer following World War II even as they slashed the rest of their payroll due to a massive slow-down in production.[2] The privileged status of engineers may well have bred resentment among mechanics and other working class employees during the late 1940s. This antipathy became increasingly evident over the course of the 1950s as even more engineers and other white-collar employees entered these workplaces. Clearly, the structural changes underway in the U.S. more generally also affected the cultures of Grumman, Republic, and Sperry. These changes introduced or heightened class tensions between engineers and blue-collar workers. Significantly, the actors involved often perceived the resulting issues of power in gendered terms. Likewise, as we shall see, workers also contested workplace control through these same gendered understandings.

All three of the companies under study went to great lengths to recruit and retain new engineers, thereby increasing their representation within the workforce. This was part of a larger national trend, too, as the Cold War combined with a growing culture of professionalization to create a heightened sense of appreciation for engineers and other experts. Professional organizations such as the National Society of Professional Engineers worked to enhance the status of engineers by creating National Engineers Week in 1951. Grumman and Republic both acknowledged this effort to recognize engineers in company publications. In an article discussing National Engineers Week for 1956, the *Republic Aviation News* observed that, "At Republic, one out of every 10 employees is in the engineering department. … Engineers make up America's largest profession."[3] The growing number of engineers at Republic was also part of a broader, national trend. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), a political lobbying organization that represented U.S. manufacturers such as Sperry Gyroscope, observed in an internal report from 1957 that "For the first time in history salaried employees out-number the production group and the trend in this direction will accelerate."[4] The shift in this particular industry was due to the growing technical complexity of the planes and other products, as well as streamlining methods of production.

By 1954 Republic's engineering workforce had become so large that the company needed to move it to bigger quarters. Oddly (or perhaps appropriately, depending on

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[2] See Richard Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 217-19.
[3] "February 19-25 Is Set Aside To Honor Engineers," *Republic Aviation News* 38, no. 7 (February 17, 1956): 3. The next chapter will examine Grumman's efforts to recruit engineers more closely.
[4] National Association of Manufacturers, Industrial Relations Division, "Reference Outline and Summary for Holding NAM Field Meetings on the White Collar Problem" (New York:, September 1957): 1, Hagley Museum and Library. The NAM included more than just engineers in the category of "salaried employees," of course. The report continued, "Within the next eight years 2 million additional professional and technical workers and 5 million more clerical and managerial people will be added to the work force." Sperry was actively involved in the NAM, hence the inclusion of NAM materials here.

one's point of view), management did this by placing the engineers literally over the heads of shop floor workers. Previously, most of Republic's engineering was performed in a separate office in Manhattan, while the production occurred in Farmingdale.[5] In 1954 the company decided to move all of engineering to the Farmingdale facilities.[6] In order to accommodate the engineers, Republic simply built a huge loft above the plant floor, creating an odd sort of second floor within the building. Assuring everyone involved that the space was insulated and air-conditioned for comfort, the company created a workplace that architecturally inscribed class relations between white and blue-collar workers.

How did this spatial arrangement stick out in people's memories? Ben Ezra, a former engineer from Republic, referred to the architecture of the plant and its reflection of class status within the workforce. Ezra also alluded to the reality of class differences in workers' minds. At the time he offered this reflection, I was actually asking him if class identity played any role in the organization of sports teams (engineering teams versus assembly teams, for example). He responded:

> Well certainly not when we played baseball, or softball, I mean. You were classified as to whether you were a good hitter, a good runner, a good fielder, that type of thing. But I would imagine that at work, when you were at work, there certainly was a differentiation between the guys who worked in the office, the engineers and stuff like that, versus the guys in the shop. You know, it might just be in the back of your mind, just the fact that the engineers were *upstairs* [emphasis his] in the offices, and the others were downstairs, in the shop where all the noise and dirt and the riveting was. So there was, maybe in the back of

[5] Michael Hlinko explained that this made for a workplace that felt chaotic at times. Adding to the confusion was the fact that Republic recruited a very cosmopolitan group of engineers. He elaborated, "See, what they did was hire a whole bunch of engineers from all different countries, when they were coming into the United States. So, I mean the room where they were sitting, it was like a ... just, a half a dozen languages. You go in there, you hear Chinese, Japanese, you hear Russian, you hear Polish. And we had to go in there and try to introduce them to the Republic systems of aviation." Hlinko added sardonically, "It was fun. It was good. It was a challenge." MH 6/23/03

[6] "370 in 'Engineer Lift' From N.Y. To L.I." *Republic Aviation News* 35, no 7 (July 23, 1954): 1.

> everyone's mind, a first-class citizen and a second-class citizen. You know, I don't think anything was ever said, but I'm sure it might have been felt by everybody. You know, that guy works for the shop, that guy works for the office.[7]

Contrary to Ezra's recollections, some of the recreation leagues at Republic also reflected the class divisions that he so eloquently alludes to. While this was certainly not a hard and fast rule, leagues often divided along class lines, with teams from engineering or personnel taking on teams from hangar assembly or the experimental shop. At times the class tension, which included underlying gender themes as well, was palpable. A 1949 article from Republic's newspaper provided two side-by-side accounts of a titanic bowling match between a team from Hangar Assembly and a team from Industrial Relations. Two participants from the opposing teams wrote very different reports, thereby providing subtle evidence of the various tensions that existed between the white and blue-collar employees. The reporter from the losing side wrote self-mockingly, "The Hangar team proved to be the great philanthropists that they always are, but much to their sorrow, the spotted pins proved their undoing."[8] Even in defeat, this blue-collar worker framed his team's loss as an instance of humanitarian charity directed at the white-collar workers. Conversely, the reporter from the Personnel team gave no quarter: "Demonstrating a marked superiority in form, style, strategy, noise making and scores, Industrial Relations' victory was never in doubt." The second reporter's account, though

[7] BE, 4/29/03. Ezra was born in 1942 and worked as an engineer in the aircraft industry during the 1960s, including three years at Republic from 1969-1972. Ezra's oral history will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, since his experiences relate chiefly to the Republic of the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, his observations about the almost unconscious linkage between workplace design and social status make the quote very pertinent to the discussion here.

[8] "Two Sides of a Story," *Republic Aviation News* 24, no. 12 (January 28, 1949): 4. The meaning of "spotted pins" is unclear. In regulation bowling, pins are spotted twelve inches apart, suggesting that the author may have been giving a sardonic explanation for his team's loss. Or, there may have actually been special pins with markings on them, that would have been worth extra points.

also possibly intended in a joking spirit, simultaneously contained a slight about the inferiority of blue-collar workers.

As suggested by the reflections of Ben Ezra, as well as the example of the bowling match, the swelling number of engineers, combined with increasing levels of bureaucracy that frequently turned some of them into low-level managers, created tension between white and blue-collar workers. Engineers and mechanics expressed this friction in a variety of ways that contain insightful combinations of class and gender concerns. In the process, they reveal a great deal about the corporate cultures of these large defense contractors. In the workplace, each group of workers espoused a different style of masculinity often formulated by deriding the opposing group's manliness. Disdain was regularly presented in a joking kind of style, though at other times it was very earnest, too.

A cartoon from the *Grumman Plane News* illustrates the jocular way that mechanics frequently derided engineers. Figure 3.1 shows two men in an outdoor setting. One stands to the right with a rifle on his shoulder. The second man is leaning against a tree while holding a deer (reminiscent of Bambi) on a leash. The deer looks plaintively at the hunter with the rifle as the leash-holder says, "ok sport – try again!"[9] The caption makes the butt of the joke clear: "Or … the engineers go deer hunting." Teasing references like this put a humorous face on the conflict between working and middle-class manliness that crept into Grumman's corporate culture during the post-war period. The engineer with the rifle has presumably already tried to shoot this female deer once and failed. The cartoonist takes aim at these middle-class men, suggesting they are so incompetent at the quintessentially manly activity of deer hunting that they are reduced to

tying a doe to a tree for sport. Stripping the skill from this most manly of activities, this effigy emasculates engineers, implying that they should leave hunting to real men. This example also demonstrates that the dynamic of gender formation between different groups of men was not just going on inside the workplace, but outside as well. People were marshalling a range of practices, including sports and other leisure activities, to make sense of their own and others' workplace gender roles.[10]

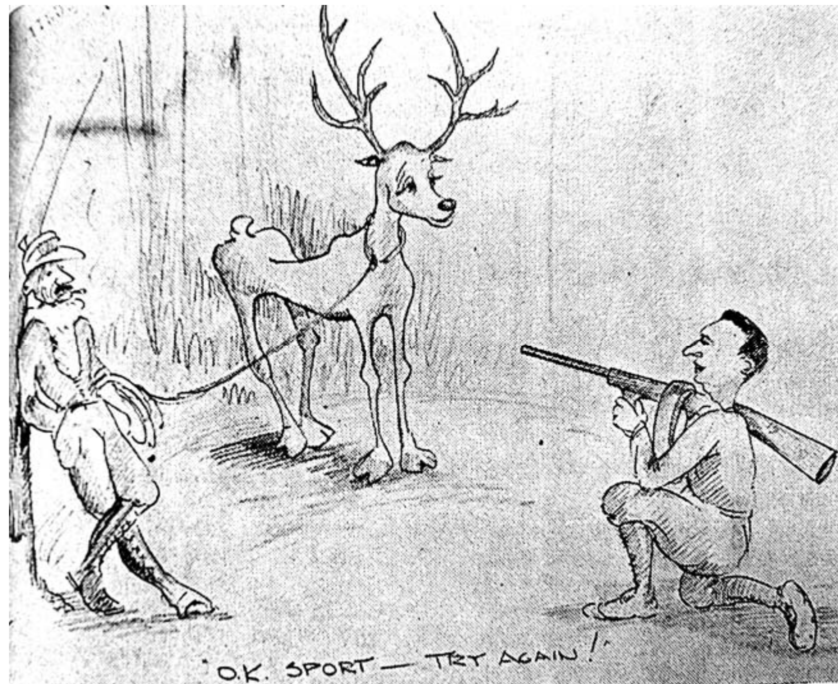

Figure 3.1 "Or … the engineers go deer hunting."

While blue-collar workers at Grumman expressed antipathy toward white-collar workers explicitly, cartoons from Republic swiped at engineers and other white-collar workers more subtly. One such example from Republic's company newspaper (Figure

[9] *Grumman Plane News* 7, no 22 (November 24, 1948): 4.
[10] Indeed, Michael Kimmel and other scholars have interpreted the rise of organized sports in the late nineteenth and twentieth century as, in part, a cultural response to a crisis of masculinity that also contained a class element. At a time when the physical strength of men was being devalued, organized sport emerged within elite schools in both Britain and the United States as a way for young men to replace the character-

3.2) made light of white-collar workers by blaming them for the frequent delays that Racers experienced getting past security check points as they entered the plants. A cartoon of a man entering the workplace in a coat and tie (the traditional garb of white-collar employees, as well as managers) sits beneath the banner headline "Have We Seen Your Badge Lately?"[11] Though the cartoon figure has remembered to don a fedora and blazer, this particular protagonist has forgotten his pants. Oblivious, he addresses a security guard: "I'm Afraid I Left My Badge Home!" At first glance, the joke is fairly straightforward – the employee identification issued to every worker is just as important as your pants, so do not leave home without it. The real subtlety and humor of this cartoon, however, lay in the other figures depicted. While the security guard looks directly at the face of the engineer, two other workers stare confoundedly at the man's striped boxers and sock garters. As with the engineer, fashion plays an important role in indicating the class identity of these two onlookers. The first man wears pants, a plaid, open-collared shirt, an outer coat, and carries a lunch pail, clearly indicating his blue-collar status. He stares with a mixture of consternation and disbelief at the skinny, almost hairless (female?) legs extending from the engineer's boxers. The second man has his back to the viewer, revealing less of his clothing. However, the pants, outer coat, and particularly the peaked cap (traditionally identified with the working class) mark this man as a blue-collar Racer.[12] He looks bemusedly at the sock garters holding up the engineer's dress socks.[13]

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building physical exertion connected with industrial labor, military duty, or the adventure of westward expansion. See Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[11] "Have We Seen Your Badge Lately?" *Republic Aviation News* 35, no 1 (April 30, 1954): 7

[12] For a fascinating study of the transformation of clothing as a social indicator, see Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[13] Sock garters were quite common prior to the introduction of elastic to men's socks in the 1960s.

Figure 3.2 “I’m Afraid I Left My Badge Home!”

The obvious class commentary in this picture also contains an interesting gender ingredient. The engineer is clearly absentminded, having forgotten his badge and (more importantly for the joke, of course) pants. Given the bemused and consternated looks of his blue-collar coworkers, however, the engineer figure is also emasculated. Both of the machinists are significantly heavier than the engineer, and they stare openly at his skinny legs. These real men can hardly believe the lack of virility displayed by the hapless engineer. Although the class and gender commentary is subtler in this cartoon than elsewhere, it provides testimony to the kind of tension that also began to emerge at Republic over the course of the 1950s.

Other sources such as “Lum Grum,” the cartoon series from the *Grumman Plane News* discussed in chapter two, demonstrate that the comical critique of engineers by mechanics in company newspapers was not limited to recreational activity and the occasional fashion faux pas, either. The professional abilities and competence of engineers came under fire, too. Lum Grum is an extremely rich source that provides a

great deal of insight into the competing gender sensibilities at Grumman, including the competition between working and middle-class masculinities.[14] In general, the artwork appears amateurish and crude, characteristics that belie the complex nature of the illustrations. In fact, as we shall see later in the chapter, creator George Ré's comics occasionally even blurred the distinctions between blue and white-collar workers. This may reflect the fact that Ré began working for Grumman in 1949 after graduating with a BS in Industrial Arts from the University of Georgia.[15] So, even though he was working on the shop floor, Ré was well educated, demonstrating that being a mechanic at Grumman was still a skilled occupation.[16] Perhaps because of this, Ré's cartoons often presented fascinating jokes that tried to play light-heartedly on differences between competing groups of workers.

Figure 3.3 offers a mocking jab at the working competence of engineers and also provides an excellent example of the complex commentaries of George Ré. Lum Grum and a fellow mechanic are pictured standing in front of a very unusual jig, a colloquial term for a frame used in the assembly or manufacturing of parts for airplanes. Jigs were designed by engineers, and this particular jig features two female legs (evident from the smooth skin and high-heeled shoes adorning them) with a large heart between them.

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[14] Lum Grum also offers quite a bit of insight into competing notions of femininity and masculinity at Grumman, which will be discussed in the following section.

[15] "Lum Grum is a real character," *Grumman Plane News* 9, No 3 (Feb 2, 1950): 2.

[16] As we shall see, engineers frequently made jokes suggesting that mechanics were dumb. George Ré even presented similar jokes in "Lum Grum," despite the fact that he worked on the shop floor. In fact, the profile of George Ré cited above opens with the seemingly defiant statement, "If anybody in the Plane News audience wants to take offence at this, [let] him." Ré explained, "'Lum Grum' is meant to be a caricature of the average Grummanite… Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to belittle anyone. Despite his looks, Lum's really a big-hearted guy – as big-hearted anyway as the fellows who give [me] the ideas for each episode." Interestingly, this description closely echoes Kay O'Regan's assessment of the differences between shop floor workers and engineers discussed in chapter two. She observed, in part, "The men in the shop were not as smart as the men in engineering, but they certainly were caring." KO, 7/10/03. How interesting that these two anecdotal bits of evidence focus on the caring, emotional qualities of blue-collar employees at Grumman during the 1940s and early 1950s.

Lum stares at the jig with surprise and perhaps even disbelief, while his coworker asks in consternation, "Who in the heck is the engineer on this jig?"[17]

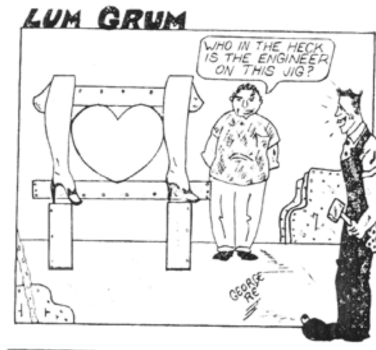

Figure 3.3

This installment of Lum Grum clearly targets engineers, but mocks them in a very interesting way that illustrates a dramatic shift in white-collar masculinity. Whereas other examples such as Figures 3.1 and 3.2 tease engineers for being hypomasculine, this one suggests that the problem with engineers is precisely the opposite – they are hypermasculine. Unable to control his own thoughts, the engineer on this particular project has absentmindedly designed a jig that betrays his inner preoccupations. This cartoon was published on February 16, quite close to Valentine's Day. The large heart in the center of the jig is certainly reminiscent of the oversized cards and boxes of chocolates that card companies and confectioners popularized in honor of Saint Valentine.[18] Perhaps Ré is even combining joking swipes at the tradition of Valentine's

[17] "Lum Grum," *Grumman Plane News* 10, no. 4 (February 16, 1951): 3.
[18] By this period, Valentine's Day was a well-established, popular celebration. The transformation of St. Valentine's Day from an obscure religious holiday to a large commercial event that emphasized consumerism and romance took place in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. See Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Fashioning of a Modern Holiday: St. Valentine's Day, 1840-1870," *Winterthur Portfolio* 28, no. 4 (Winter, 1993): 209-245. Also, see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Consumer Rites: The Buying & Selling of American Holidays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Here Schmidt elaborates on the theme of commerce and holidays more broadly. In particular, the first chapter deals with St. Valentine's Day as an example of the first commercially developed holiday in the U.S.

Day and engineers. Unable to fully contain their sexual urges in the first place, Ré suggests that engineers are even more out of control for buying into the consumerism promoted by Valentine's Day.

Clearly, Lum Grum was also offering commentary on important questions such as worker control. The contest here was over the machine itself, over who controlled the shop floor. Machinists and engineers jockeyed for control of production processes, looking to maintain influence. But the point that Lum Grum illustrates so well is the fact that gender, class, sexuality, and race all played important roles in the way that various sets of workers understood and framed these struggles for control. The sophisticated, multi-layered critique embedded in the deceptively crude Lum Grum illustrations challenges some labor historians and other scholars to reconsider the many partitions among American workers, and what impact these had on the way the thought of themselves and others.[19]

The reason for the change in representations of engineers from hypomasculine to hypermasculine in the ten years or so following World War II may have been the changing makeup of engineers themselves. With the introduction of the GI Bill, many white men from blue-collar backgrounds were able to enter universities for the first time and obtain the necessary education to become engineers and other white-collar professionals.[20] This development had an interesting impact on the corporate culture of

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[19] I am thinking here specifically of the work of David Montgomery, though the argument could be extended to other labor historians as well. Indeed, other scholars have pointed out the problems that Montgomery runs into when he fails to incorporate or account for the many divisions within the American working class. For example, see Olivier Zunz, review of David Montgomery, *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market During the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in *Contemporary Sociology* 24, Issue 4 (July 1995): 399-400.

[20] For a popular treatment on the overall impact of the GI Bill, see Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: the GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Potomac, 1999). Also, see Michael J. Bennett, "The

these companies and Grumman in particular. As demonstrated in chapter two, the workplace was reasserted as a site of masculine identity formation following the war. However, this process also involved competition between different groups of workers (engineers and mechanics) who asserted different kinds of masculinity (respectable and rough) as part of their claim to greater status within the workplace. Moreover, by the early 1950s the conceptualization of masculinity was also changing for one of these groups. Perhaps influenced by an influx of men from working-class backgrounds, middle-class masculinity changed among engineers during this period, becoming tougher and focusing more explicitly on themes of rough masculinity such as the objectification of women and harsh language.[21]

In fact, this critique of engineers as hypermasculine in the early 1950s resonates with other evidence from the historical record, particularly at Grumman. There, it

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Law That Worked," *Educational Record* 75, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 6-15. Bennett maintains that the Servicemen's Readjustment Act "was the law that enabled millions of working class Americans to go to college, buy their own homes, and become, in reality, the members of the middle class they always thought themselves as being – but all too seldom were." (7) See also Clark Kerr, "Expanding Access and Changing Missions: The Federal Role in U.S. Higher Education," *Educational Record* 75, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 27-31. Kerr observed that the GI Bill opened up college education to veterans from working class families, noting that "universal access [to college education] meant moving from mostly middle-income access before WW II to all-income access after WW II. Half of the students who used the GI Bill came from families in which neither parent had gone to college." (27) On the inequity of benefits for black and women veterans, see Edward Humes, *Over Here: How the G.I. Bill Transformed the American Dream* (New York: Harcourt, 2006)

[21] This observation about men from working-class backgrounds becoming engineers and thereby obtaining middle-class status has actually become a source of debate among scholars in recent years. Marcus Stanley suggests that the limited empirical data available shows no dramatic change in the entry of working class veterans to college. In other words, "There is no evidence of an equalizing effect of the WW II GI Bill on higher education across social classes." Marcus Stanley, "College Education and the mid-century GI Bills," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118, no. 2 (May 2003): 671-708. On the other hand, the work of Sarah Turner and John Bound suggests that educational attainment for returning veterans was greater (particularly for white men in all regions of the country, although this was not the case for black men, and particularly for black men born in the South). See John Bound and Sarah Turner, "Going to War and Going to College: Did WW II and the GI Bill Increase Educational Attainment for Returning Veterans?" *Journal of Labor Economics* 20 (2002): 784-815. Their response to this question is "Yes," and an innovative reading of the limited data available suggests that working class veterans benefited in particular. For an assessment of the different experiences of white and black veterans, see Sarah Turner and John Bound, "Closing the Gap of Widening the Divide: The Effects of the GI Bill and World War II on the

appears that engineers engaged in zealous efforts to prove their masculinity to their coworkers, including women. As discussed earlier, gender identity contains a strong performative aspect – people perform gender roles for one another, thus establishing or reinforcing their identity for both themselves and others. Engineers were no exception in this regard and frequently performed a kind of sexualized, hypermasculine role. Stories demonstrating this, like the one discussed at the beginning of the chapter, became part of the company's lore.

Other examples of engineers "performing" masculinity found their way into official company publications at Grumman, too. A *Plane News* article from 1953 gave breezy coverage of a recent softball game played between female Grummanites during a lunch break. The report opened, "When Rodgers and Hammerstein decided there was nothing, absolutely nothing like the frame of a dame, they were not aware of the unqualified support they would receive from Grumman engineers."[22] Although the article is unsigned, we might surmise that the author (like the anonymous creator of the story about Jeff Norris) was an engineer. Once again, this article portrays engineers at Grumman as part of the rougher world of masculinity that dominated Grumman's corporate culture.

Significantly, this article also illustrates the important homosocial component of masculinity for these engineers. The article continues, "Practically every one of the plant

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Educational Outcomes of Black Americans," *Journal of Economic History* 63, no. 1 (March 2003): 145-177.

[22] "'Slide Rule' for Girls, while Engineers Study Frames," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 17 (August 13, 1953): 3. This is a reference to the song "There Is Nothin Like a Dame" from the Broadway musical *South Pacific*. This particular song is a kind of lament sung by a sailor, complaining about the lack of women available to military men in the South Pacific. The stanza that the *Plane News* article refers to is: "Nothin' else was built the same/Nothin' in the world/As the soft and wavy frame/Like the silhouette of a dame!/There is absolutely nothin' like a frame of a dame." The male reading audience of the *Plane News*,

five engineers came out last week to study the framework of the gals from their department as the lassies waged a terrific softball battle during the second lunch period." In this case (as we have seen in other examples, too), it was important to be seen watching women *by other men*. This points to one of the important ways that gender roles were reinforced in this workplace – men were not only watching female employees (and monitoring their maintenance of gender norms), but watching each other, too. The title of the article encapsulates these complex relationships: "'Slide Rule' for Girls, while Engineers Study Frames." The "Sliding Rule" was a stipulation often put into recreational softball leagues to minimize the chance of injury to players.[23] The title of this article creates two double entendres that play on engineering and gender themes. The first is the double play of the term "slide rule," which refers to softball's sliding rule as well as slide ruler, the instrument that engineers used to make mathematical calculations prior to the introduction of electronic calculators. In addition, the term "frames" works on two levels as well. Many engineers spent a good deal of time designing frames for Grumman's aircraft, while the double reference to the "frames" of the female employees also demonstrates the way that these white collar workers established their virility in public.

These examples demonstrate that asserting masculinity was a complex affair for engineers during the post-war period (and particularly for engineers at Grumman). Even though they thought of themselves as better educated and perhaps even more "civilized" than their working class peers, they had to prove their masculinity as an important

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which was obviously involved in the construction of frames for aircraft, would have appreciated the reference to "frames" on a number of levels.

ingredient in justifying this elevated class standing. This might help to explain why the corporate culture at Grumman was more self-consciously masculine than Republic or Sperry during the 1950s. Again, Grumman workers were the only ones of the three groups that never organized. The next chapter will elaborate on this point more fully, but to connect this observation briefly to my overarching thesis regarding gender and unions, one of the things that Grumman engineers prided themselves on was their ability to work closely with people on the shop floor. This state of affairs changed over time and Grumman's workforce eventually became as segregated at Republic's and Sperry's by the 1960s. However, the greater interaction between engineers and blue-collar workers at Grumman during the 1950s may help to explain why the engineers there carved out a more hypermasculine identity for themselves than their peers at other companies.

As part of their case for staking out a rougher masculine identity, engineers at Grumman were fully capable of responding in kind to the emasculating jokes of shop floor workers. Recalling the definition of rough masculinity provided by Joshua Freeman, this sort of joking was one of the hallmarks of what Freeman characterized as "swaggering masculinity."[24] As part of this adversarial posturing, engineers and other white-collar employees often produced jokes that questioned the masculinity of their blue-collar contemporaries in various ways. Returning to the work of Fred Dresch, the popular Grumman cartoonist discussed in chapter two, we see one common theme – that shop floor workers were lazy, often hypocritically so. Figure 3.4 features a man in a white shirt and tie standing over another man who is laying prone on a workbench. The

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[23] The rule calls for a base runner to avoid collisions with fielders during a close play at a base (particularly home plate) by sliding into the base, rather than running into the fielder in an effort to disrupt their attempt to catch the ball and tag the runner out.

man on the bench is wearing a nightshirt, complete with slippers and cap, and is seemingly just lifting his head from a pillow to look blearily at the first man. The man in the tie addresses him, “Boy! To you rest period means rest, PERIOD!”[25]

Figure 3.4 “Boy! To you rest period means rest, PERIOD!”

Once again, clothing and context provide the clues for the true target of this joke. The reclining man rests on a workbench, which is made obvious by the toolbox on the shelf beneath him. The implication is that this workbench is the working station for this particular employee, and that he has taken advantage of his break to get changed into his nightshirt and catch up on some sleep. Dresch suggests that this blue-collar worker (and, by extension, anyone who takes a break at 10:15, the hour indicated on the clock in the background) is lazy. The critique of shop floor personnel is fairly clear in this regard.[26] The man in the tie presents a more complex figure to decipher, however. The white shirt and tie indicate that he could be an engineer. However, like the reclining Grummanite,

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[24] Joshua B. Freeman, “Hard Hats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations,” *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1993), 732.
[25] *Grumman Plane News* 8, no 13 (June 23, 1949): 2.

this figure is also a bit emasculated, too. He has a rather sizeable paunch, receding hairline, and wears glasses. Each of these characteristics suggests a less than superlative manly figure, suggesting that Dresch may have also been taking a sly swipe at managers, too.

In addition to decrying mechanics as lazy, employee cartoons in company newspapers also accused them of being spectacularly stupid. In this regard, some employees used education as a different factor to frame manliness. In fact, this is a fairly common theme in "Lum Grum". A representative example has Lum standing before the personnel office (which conveniently has a counter that is staffed by a man in a suit with a cigar). A woman standing next to the symbolic blue-collar Grummanite explains, "Lum wants to get into the electrical department because his doctor ordered light work."[27] Jokes like this are obviously intended as just that – jokes. However, they also reflect a deeper set of issues and anxieties related to the function of gender and class (as well as race) in the workplace. As mentioned above, George Ré's artwork in the Lum Grum strip is much cruder than the work of other artists such as Fred Dresch. However, Re's illustrations provide insights that are even richer, in some ways, than Dresch's panels. Lum Grum's appearance is very suggestive of a Neanderthal, complete with big brow and long limbs. The effect was intentional, as indicated in another installment of the cartoon (Figure 3.5) where Lum Grum is looking at someone with precisely his appearance and announcing, "That sure is a dopey lookin feller."[28]

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[26] Interestingly, the sleeping man's legs are much hairier than the engineer depicted in Figure 3.2. Perhaps this is intended to suggest that the shop floor worker is less evolved than the other figure (in an evolutionary sense – perhaps he is more Neanderthal than Homo Sapiens).
[27] *Grumman Plane News* 8, no 14 (July 7, 1949): 7.
[28] "Lum Grum," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 9 (April 27, 1950): 3.

Figure 3.5 "That sure is a dopey lookin feller."

Cartoons from other companies also referred to the supposed stupidity of blue-collar workers. An issue of the *Republic Aviation News* featured a cartoon of two men in coveralls on either side of an I-beam (Figure 3.6). The man on the left is either driving a rivet or drilling a screw into the beam. The second man on the right is leaning precariously close to the beam, his eye just inches away from the spot where the rivet will come through from the other side. Evidently acting as assistant, the man in imminent danger of losing his eye announces, "Just a little more, Mac. She oughta come thru soon"[29] In this joke, the Racer mechanics are not just dumb, they are a danger to themselves and each other. Again, commentators embedded issues of control within jokes like this. The kind of work being performed here matters. The illustration suggests, among other things, blue-collar workers handling machines deserve less control over work because they are incompetent and dangerous. The imagery also contains some mild sexual overtones, perhaps further demeaning these Racers by implying some sort of sexual connection between them.

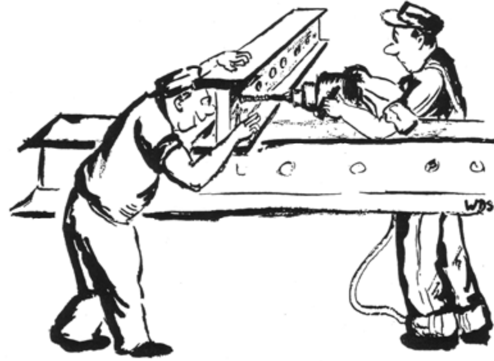

Figure 3.6 "Just a little more, Mac. She oughta come thru soon"

Despite examples like this from Republic, the most biting instances of white-collar workers mocking blue-collar workers came from Grumman publications. In particular, Fred Dresch penned a number of cartoons that emasculated blue collar Grummanites by suggesting they were old, incapable, and easily distracted (to the point of almost being hypermasculine, once again). In fact, the theme of working class Grummanites being over-the-hill was the subject of some of Dresch's earliest work. One of his first cartoons, which appeared in the *Plane News* in July 1948, featured two older men in shop floor garb sitting in the foreground. Behind them was a chaotic scene of younger men in shirts and ties working furiously. One older man said to the other, "Yes sir, these young people today sure are lazy!"[30] This anecdote clearly served as an example of generational conflict, but there are overlapping themes of class and gender, too. The older characters in the foreground are men, and in particular, white, working class men. Upending the conventional understanding of blue-collar masculinity as virile and physical (though still white), Dresch instead suggested that these two men were too old and lethargic to keep pace with the frenetic engineers working in the background.

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[29] *Republic Aviation News* 23, no. 12 (July 16, 1948): 3.
[30] *Grumman Plane News* 7, no 13 (July 7, 1948): 2.

Indeed, the older characters were not even aware of what was going on around them, providing further evidence of their emasculated, elderly condition. Moreover, this illustration also has the subject of control embedded within it. In Dresch's formulation, the issue of perceived control was tied to masculinity.

Dresch made mocking references to the education, maturity, and masculinity of shop floor personnel in other ways, too. Figure 3.7 shows a large man in a football uniform walking with a lunchbox in his hand. Two other men behind him joke, "All American in nineteen thirty-nine … and he'll never let you forget it!"[31] The football uniform and the lunchbox signal that the man in the foreground is intended to be a working class Grummanite. The lunchbox is a particularly telling addition since it clarifies that the man is not on his way to a football game at all, but rather to work in the plant. The two figures in the background are also fascinating. They are thin and dressed in a preppy style, complete with sweaters. Perhaps suggestive of college graduates themselves, the clothing and body type further identifies these men as middle-class. The point of the joke now becomes clear – the working class Grummanite in the foreground, though a potential college graduate, was most successful as a football player and continues to revel in his past glories. Aside from suggesting that this man's mind stopped developing before his body (and during college, no less), the cartoon also quite sadly implies that this shop floor worker has nothing brighter to look forward to in his future. Moreover, we again see the way that some workers used outside activities such as sports to define and denigrate other groups of male workers, simultaneously challenging their masculinity.

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[31] *Grumman Plane News* 17, no 16 (August 8, 1948): 1.

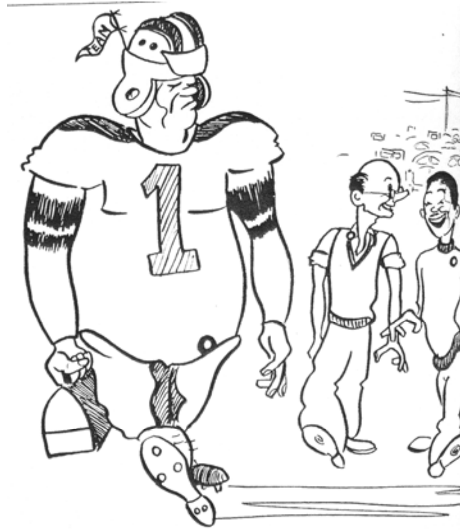

Figure 3.7 “All American in nineteen thirty-nine … and he’ll never let you forget it!

The most egregious of the Dresch cartoons also continues this theme of demeaning working-class men while simultaneously offending female employees, too. Figure 3.8 depicts a woman in some form of intimate apparel standing in front of a time clock and punching men’s timecards for them. The men are clearly shop floor personnel, and stand patiently in line waiting for the sexy woman to take their cards. The foreground features two men in ties and coats. One addresses the other, “No trouble now – the boys get a kick out of punching the clock!”[32] This image is interesting for its objectification of women (another common theme in Dresch’s work), which certainly goes along with earlier accounts of catcalling and harassment. In particular, the way this woman is objectified is quite intriguing. She is not necessarily wearing a standard undergarment or piece of lingerie, which Dresch had certainly drawn previously. Instead, this woman is wearing something that resembles a corset or basque, along with stockings and heels. The corset or basque might have been a common enough type of lingerie at

the time, but this one has a slightly different appearance. Perhaps the inspiration here is Betty Paige, a pin-up model who became quite famous (or infamous) in New York during the 1950s for posing in outfits that crossed over into fetishlike, sado-masochistic themes. This suggests a fascinating connection with the more obvious commentary about shop floor Grummanites. In addition to stating that blue-collar workers were easily distracted by women and unable to control their own sexual urges (again, hypersexual), Dresch also adds a sado-masochistic element, implying that these male workers were willing participants in their own managerial exploitation (perhaps even perversely so).[33]

Figure 3.8 “No trouble now – the boys get a kick out of punching the clock!”

While most of the class and gender tension between blue and white-collar workers was expressed in the form of jokes, demeaning points of view were sometimes quite earnest, especially when it came to the question of labor unions. During his oral history, William Wait provided an unusual glimpse into the way that the entry of the IAM to Republic in 1950 upset existing labor relations. Wait began working at Republic before

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[32] Fred Dresch, *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 13 (June 21, 1951): 2.

the IAM organized shop floor workers, and he believed that the ultimate success of the union was related in part to the "high-handed" style of management (or, as he described it, their attitude was, "We're not gonna have a union here, we're treating you well, don't vote for them."). Wait's characterization of management as arrogant is interesting to begin with, since it suggests there was an implicitly gendered element to the decision by some workers to vote for a union. Management at Republic could be quite brutal at times, practicing a very capricious and rough form of masculinity, which left workers feeling economically and socially emasculated. By turning to a union for protection from this style of oversight, workers sought to protect their economic role as well as their gender identity – indeed, these two elements were so intricately bound that separating them is very difficult.

For his part, Wait offered the following commentary on the impact that the union had on employee relations at Republic:

> BW: [The IAM] had several elections before they finally won … I was sorry to see it. I'm, again, a dinosaur. In most cases where you were talking with old-time people, you could talk to them and you could get them to do what you wanted to do without going through a lot of paperwork and ...
> SP: You're talking about people on the shop floor?
> BW: Yeah. You could say that you wanted to do this and such, and they would accept reasonable direction on how to do it. There were a few people that ... I think that basically the union appealed to the lower echelon of the factory workers, and they wanted to cover their asses. They wanted to get some of the benefits that the other people had. So, I didn't have any real problems with it. There were some people who did, who just wanted to say, "This is the way it's going to be and you better do it," and it didn't work.[34]

[33] While this play on Marx's concept of "false consciousness" and the connection to sado-masochism may be a bit of an interpretative stretch, this particular cartoon did manage to offend readers. The responses that Dresch generated with this illustration are detailed later in this chapter.
[34] WW, 4/15/05.

Wait's observation about who benefited from the arrival of the IAM and how this complicated the lives of engineers is quite interesting. He draws a distinction between experienced shop floor workers who had been with the company for some time ("old-time people") and newer, less experienced personnel (which he further distinguishes with the label "lower echelon"). In this formulation, the arrival of the IAM benefited the lower level of factory workers by providing them with some insulation against the condescending style of certain managers and engineers, which Wait also alluded to. However, the trade-off was that the union added (seemingly) unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and paperwork, which complicated the lives of all engineers, including Wait. Clearly, the issue of workplace control was also present here. Wait indicated that older employees who had been with the company longer were more amenable to accepting direction, or conceding control. But less senior employees (presumably younger and newer to the company) were not necessarily so willing, and turned to the union for support in their efforts to control their working lives versus other groups of workers.

In conclusion, the tension between mechanics and engineers was real, though it often found expression in the form of jokes or recreational sports leagues. The class conflict implicit in the competition between shop floor personnel and white-collar workers also contained a gender overlay. Each group attempted to disparage the masculinity of the other through the mediums of jokes, cartoons, and sports competition. In response to this cultural challenge, as well as the broad social changes ushered in by the G.I. Bill, the kind of masculinity that engineers and white-collar employees (particularly those at Grumman) espoused changed during the late 1940s and 1950s. Many of these engineers began to adopt a tough, demonstrative version of masculinity in

the workplace. As part of this, these white-collar workers also questioned the manliness of their blue-collar coworkers. Likewise, working class masculinity changed dramatically in the fifteen years following World War II.

From Cross-Dressing to Weight Lifting: Changes in Working Class Masculinity, 1940s-1950s

Over the course of the 1940s and 1950s representations of working class men changed, signifying a cultural and social response to changes both within the workplace and at home. As the aircraft manufacturing workplace became increasingly regimented, initiating an immediate and personal crisis of masculinity, Cold War rhetoric also worried about the importance of manly toughness to the security of the nation, thereby instigating another, broader, crisis of masculinity. Curiously, images of working class men at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry became less diverse during this period. In the 1940s and early 1950s, a rich variety of photographs and representations depicted working class men embodying some aspects of rugged masculinity and alternately flaunting other gender conventions. In some cases this flaunting even consisted of dressing in women's clothing for various types of performances. However, by the late 1950s, company publications no longer featured these sorts of comic episodes. Instead, photographs of working class male body builders, who were also employees, appeared in company newspapers, particularly Sperry's. These photographs focused on the male body and the message of self-improvement quite explicitly. While the companies had previously allowed for a more creative space where male workers could play with cultural categories

like gender, by the late 1950s the only acceptable representation of working class men focused on physical prowess and power. The companies played an important role in this development, as the company publications all became more polished and professional during this period.

Male workers at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry faced multiple crises in identity during the post war years. Over the course of the late 1940s and 1950s, Cold War rhetoric filled U.S. political culture and created, in the words of K.A. Cuordileone, "an exaggerated cult of masculine toughness and virility."[35] The crisis in masculinity expanded to include concerns from cultural critics and intellectuals about domesticity, fatherhood, male role models for young boys, and homosexuality.[36] For both blue and white-collar male employees, the cultural and political discourse within the U.S. urged them to be tough, rugged men. While several scholars such as Cuordileone and Kimmel have examined the way this discourse played out in the public sphere, few have examined its impact within the workplace.

In addition to broad political and cultural developments that argued for the need for rugged masculinity from American men, there were also social changes underway in the more personal and immediate space of the workplace. In particular, shop floor personnel found themselves subjected to greater managerial scrutiny and a decreasing

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[35] K.A. Cuordileone, "Politics in an Age of Anxiety: Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," *Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 2000), 515. Cuordileone's study represents an excellent starting point for examining changes in post-war masculinity in U.S. political discourse.

[36] For a consideration of cultural and intellectual developments in post-war masculinity in the U.S., see Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 227-228. As Kimmel points out, many Americans worried that the country would lapse back into a depression following the end of World War II. They responded to the perceived threat to masculinity by emphasizing fatherhood. Social scientists such as Talcott Parsons insisted on the centrality of fatherhood for the normal development of children and adolescent males. On questions of sexuality in the post-war period, see Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

degree of craftsmanship in the production of airplanes and other items. A front-page article from the *Sperry News* optimistically declared "New Changes in Plant Layout Improve Working Conditions."[37] Although the author began by emphasizing the way that changing workplace arrangements were meant to improve the comfort of employees, the article later admitted that the underlying goal was imposing uniformity on workstations in an effort to improve effectiveness. Specifically, "Two important developments have taken place in plant layout, the first is standardization, the second – a move towards greater efficiency in what has come to be termed human engineering." The company particularly emphasized greater efficiency with regard to factory floor space. New benches, specifically designed by Sperry, were introduced for workers. These benches had an extra shelf underneath, allowing for the storage of any necessary parts or tools right at hand (or underfoot, as the case may be), thus removing the necessity for a worker to get up from his bench while working.[38] In a subtle and approving nod to mass-production methods, the article concluded, "The benches are usually assembled in long rows to minimize aisles and to provide for progressive assembly … All of this costs less than standard benches, is more efficient and improves 'hit and miss' working

[37] "New Changes in Plant Layout Improve Working Conditions," *Sperry News* 15, no. 9 (June 30, 1958): 1.
[38] Indeed, there are other indications that time management was a source of tension between workers and managers. A number of cartoons from Grumman publications during the 1950s indicate that managers went to great lengths to make sure employees worked a full workday, did not take too many breaks, and that breaks taken were no more than the allowed 15 minutes. Sperry even went so far as to publish a front-page reprimand of its workers for inefficiency. See "Your Observance of Company Working Rules is Essential," *Sperry News* 15, no. 16 (November 17, 1958): 1. The article admonishes employees to make sure they show up to work on time, do not leave early, and do not take too much time for lunch. This warning was spurred because "Recently, one of our major customers, a branch of the armed services, wrote to the president of the company, declaring that their representatives had observed employees arriving late, leaving early, and taking extended lunch periods. They felt these practices were adding to the cost of the products the company makes for them. Since our activity depends to such a large extent on the military services, this complaint is serious indeed." To enforce these rules, "Supervisors have been monitoring entrance and exit gates, the cafeterias, and several other locations, in recent weeks. They are determining whether people are going to lunch during their assigned periods, whether they arrive on time for work, and whether they work to the end of their respective shifts."

layouts." In other words, Sperry had designed new workstations that allowed for a more assembly line style of production. Shop floor workers at Republic and Grumman faced similar drives toward regulated routine and improved efficiency.[39] These attempts by all three companies to increase management control of workers left a number of men complaining about their reduced autonomy in the workplace.[40] At the same time that the internal and external pressures outlined above precipitated a crisis in masculinity, representations of blue-collar male workers in company publications changed quite dramatically.

The kind of masculinity espoused by working class men in these companies increasingly emphasized rugged features of manliness such as toughness and physical strength in the post-war period. To be sure, rough masculinity was visible prior to the war, as reflected in workplace practices such as the half-serious punches administered to shop worker Joe Armstrong when he inadvertently set a fire outside of a Grumman plant.[41] But following the war, a sort of rough, physical masculinity was also on display in recreational activities like boxing. During the 1940s and 1950s, boxing was a very

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[39] Interestingly, the companies tried to increase efficiency among engineers, as well, even going so far as to attempt to eliminate groups deemed redundant or unnecessary. For example, see G. S. Starke, "The Corps with a Singular Goal," *Sperryscope* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1951): 14-17. Starke opens with the striking line, "In this era of emphasis upon economic security, it might seem paradoxical that a sizeable segment of personnel at the Sperry Gyroscope Company Division is devoted to the goal of working itself out of a job." The article elaborates upon the efforts of the Field Engineering Force to render itself obsolete by promoting customers to take on its function. Field Engineering was a group of engineers employed to work with customers outside the company and abroad, helping with training and maintenance of various Sperry products in the field. Starke was a Vice-President and General Sales Manager at Sperry Gyroscope, which suggests that getting rid of this particular group of engineers was an important goal for the company. *Sperryscope* was another company publication, though quite different from the *Sperry News*. *Sperryscope* was published by the parent company, the Sperry Corporation, and so featured articles on other business divisions such as Vickers, Incorporated and the New Holland Machine Company. *Sperryscope* benefited from higher production values than the *Sperry News*, which likely resulted from the fact that *Sperryscope* was intended for a broader audience. U.S. military leaders wrote many of the articles in *Sperryscope*, and the magazine was presumably circulated among military customers, in addition to the various Sperry divisions.

[40] Chapter four will explore this issue in more detail, contrasting the changes in corporate culture and management from the 1950s to the 1960s.

popular pastime at all three companies, especially Grumman.[42] The company had a boxing team that competed with teams from other employers in the region (including Republic). Even though the working class masculinity embraced by these men emphasized physical prowess and toughness (not to say controlled brutality), the way the boxers were presented is very intriguing. Boxing team members from both Grumman and Republic were generally photographed in informal poses while wearing street clothes, even though they could have easily been photographed in the ring during a competition or in the gym practicing (or posing together for a group shot, for that matter). The emphasis was not on the body, but on the individual boxers and the camaraderie between them. Emphasizing these aspects of the sport presented a powerful example of the male gender role as tough, yet still an important site of socialization.[43] Figure 3.9 is a photograph that appeared in Republic's newspaper in 1949.[44] The five members of the boxing team lift Frankie Stefano (their coach and a fellow Racer) off the ground in a bit of horseplay. Even though two of the men, including Stefano, are smiling, three others are not even looking at the camera, which suggests that the horseplay captured in this photo may have been genuinely spontaneous. Even if the photograph was not completely

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[41] See chapter one, pages 1-2.
[42] The sport was also popular before the war. For example, see *Grumman Plane News* 1, no. 7 (January 24, 1941): 3. This is a gossip column that actually provides two examples of the public discourse about masculinity at Grumman: in the first, someone is teased about being bald, and in the second, someone else is praised for being a boxer.
[43] Indeed, the importance of boxing as a role model for gender identity is suggested by examples of young boys and teenagers boxing at company picnics. This happened on at least one occasion, at Grumman's annual picnic in 1948. Organizers held a boxing tournament for youngsters (presumably children of employees), which drew commentary from none other than Fred Dresch. He prepared one cartoon that made a joking reference to the age of the "children" involved (a woman with a towering, clearly teenage son, pleads with the organizer, "O-Oh, Mr. Peanuts, please enter Abelard. He's only half-past ten!" See *Grumman Plane News* 7, no. 14 (July 21, 1948): 2. However, the next issue of the paper reproduced photographs from the picnic, including one featuring two young boys in the ring with gloves on. See *Grumman Plane News* 7, no. 15 (August 4, 1948): 3. In addition to illustrating one of the ways that children were socialized regarding gender roles, this example also demonstrates the continued popularity of boxing following World War II.

unprompted, the fact that the boxers and their coach were not organized into a formal arrangement suggests that these men and the editors of the paper were not overly concerned with displaying their bodies for public viewing and/or consumption.[45] Over the course of the 1950s participation in the boxing team evidently declined, and by the 1960s pugilists were either no longer present or simply no longer visible in the workplace.[46] Instead, interest grew among workers for participating in bowling or golf leagues.[47]

Figure 3.9 "1949 Golden Gloves Hopefuls"

Paradoxically, in addition to photographs of male employees participating in quintessentially manly activities like boxing, other pictures and representations from the 1940s and 1950s showed men playing with or even subverting hypermasculine gender

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[44] "1949 Golden Gloves Hopefuls," *Republic Aviation News* 24, no. 12 (January 28, 1949): 4.
[45] Other examples of this can be found in *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 2 (January 19, 1950): 6; *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 3 (February 2, 1950): 3; and *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 3 (February 2, 1950): 6. These are both articles that covered a boxing tournament that team members had entered.
[46] This is evident from the declining references to the boxing team in the *Grumman Plane News*. In addition, a few of the oral history subjects I spoke with had no recollection of the team at all. When I mentioned boxing to Robert Tallman, he suggested, "That was during World War II." Tallman started working for Grumman in 1953 and had no memory of a boxing team being in place while he was working for the company. RT, 3/10/03.
[47] Boxing was very popular during the first half of the twentieth century in the United States, partly as a way of encouraging boys to learn self-defense and other important qualities of manliness, particularly

conventions. A variety of images displayed men wearing women's clothing in various settings. Most of these examples come from Grumman's company newspaper, which suggests once again that masculinity played a particularly large role in the corporate culture there. None of the cases from Grumman showed men trying to seriously cross-dress or earnestly pass as women. Rather, the objective was to flaunt conventions for comic effect, as in the tradition of vaudeville or burlesque.[48] These employees were actually highlighting the centrality of a strong masculine identity for male workers in the workplace, even though appearing publicly in this garb that might have been subversive in other contexts.

In some instances the photos presented men who were wearing women's clothing for some performance outside of the workplace. Figure 3.10 is a picture of two Grummanites who dressed as women for a play in nearby Floral Park. Charles "Babyface" Rogers is captured reaching mischievously for a cigarette dangling from the mouth of Gene "Sweetie Pie" Klee. Rogers played a minister's wife, while Klee portrayed "the typical gossiping old biddy."[49] Referring to Klee, author Jean Miligi added mischievously, "Just the type, isn't he?" These two men were clearly not engaged in a serious attempt at gender bending or cross-dressing. Neither of them was wearing any makeup, and Rogers even had a heavy five o'clock shadow on his face (evidently the

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among the middle class. See Julia Grant, "A 'Real' Boy and Not a Sissy: Gender, Childhood, and Masculinity, 1890-1940," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 4 (2004): 829-51.

[48] For an examination of vaudeville during the first half of the twentieth century, ee Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). For a useful discussion of burlesque, see Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Of course, burlesque generally referred to female performers who dressed as men while making no real attempt to hide their female identities. The practice scandalized commentators such as William Dean Howell, who were disturbed by the way that gender conventions were upended in such a titillating manner. The difference with the Grumman performers highlighted here is that these were men posing as women, who made little attempt to hide their male identities. However, the goals of these parodies were similar – to upend gender and class conventions, simultaneously humiliating high art and elevating low art.

point of Miligi's labeling him "Babyface"). The desired effect was obviously laughter, and just in case there was any confusion on the point, the author helpfully added, "Oh you kid!" Public displays like this, in which grown men appeared in women's clothing, were one way to reinforce standards and expectations regarding appropriate male behavior and appearance through comic relief.

Figure 3.10 "Our very own"

Interestingly, class distinctions continued to play a role in public cross-dressing. Most of the men who appeared in women's clothing were blue-collar employees from Grumman. A photo that ran in Grumman's company paper just prior to the end of the war illustrates the theme. Two men from plant two, described sardonically as "Graceful Creatures," dressed as ballerinas and performed for wounded veterans at army and navy hospitals.[50] Moments like this were meant to inspire laughter, as the two performers would presumably bumble about stage in a mockery of ballet. This provides fascinating class commentary in and of itself, of course. These two blue-collar workers donned leotards and tutus in order to provide comic relief to men in the service, many of whom were also from working class backgrounds. The joke would have functioned on two

[49] Jean Miligi, "thru the keyhole," *Grumman Plane News* 10, no. 9 (April 26, 1951): 4.

levels. First, the performers were goofing on gender norms by "appearing" as women. Second, the performers were actually providing a rather biting class commentary, insinuating that ballet was an affluent and effeminate waste of time (and so, once again, we see that these public appearances in women's clothing were really about reaffirming gender and class identity for working class men).

In addition, class distinctions were apparent in one fascinating example of a white-collar employee who appeared in women's clothing. Toward the end of 1944, none other than Fred Dresch (the artist described earlier) dressed as a French countess "to dance the minuet" at a company party.[51] Grumman's newspaper printed a photograph of Dresch in costume just one month after the "graceful creatures" described above. Whereas the men from plant 2 dressed as ballerinas, this white-collar employee appeared as a countess, an explicitly aristocratic figure. As with the working class lampoon of affluent sensibilities, Dresch's costume was no doubt intended as a joke. However, the meaning of the aristocratic costume as a class signifier is less clear. The "graceful creatures" drew upon contemporary cultural figures for their humor. Dresch, on the other hand, invoked an antiquated cultural icon. In this instance, the purpose of the joke is less clear. Was he playing ironically on working class suggestions that middle class engineers were effete? Dresch's costume is far more elaborate than the costumes of his working class peers. Perhaps in some complicated way he actually intended to invoke the elevated status of aristocratic Europeans. In either case, this example suggests fascinating insight about masculinity and class during this period.

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[50] *Grumman Plane News* 3, no. 28 (July 13, 1944): 4.
[51] *Grumman Plane News* 3, no. 34 (August 24, 1944): 12.

Other examples demonstrate just how earnest the focus on men looking like men was for workers at Grumman during the post-war years. In some instances, male employees from abroad were mocked for their appearance as children. In one such instance, a photograph was reproduced in "The Slipstream," a regular column in the *Plane News* that presented news and notes from various departments at Grumman. This is a picture of a Grumman employee when he was three years old and living in Switzerland. The boy is wearing what appears to be a dress, and has longer hair than what would have been considered acceptable for a man in 1950, the year this article was published. The name of the guilty Grummanite is not given, but the author queries, "Can you guess who he is"?[52] Since the name of the employee has not been provided, determining his class identity is problematic. However, whether the anonymous employee worked on the shop floor or at a drafting board, the subject of ridicule seems fairly clear. The fact that his coworkers were teasing this adult male for resembling an American girl when he was a young boy in Switzerland demonstrates, through contrast, just how powerfully images of the body (and more particularly, the trappings of the body) acted as markers of class and gender identities.[53]

The class tensions implicit in the gendered mocking of the anonymous Swiss boy became more explicit in another workplace episode captured by the *Grumman Plane News* a few years later. An April, 1953 issue featured a picture of a grown man in shorts, white shirt, and vest, complete with golden locks of hair (doubtless a wig). Although the

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[52] "The Slipstream," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no. 2 (January 19, 1950): 3.

[53] In addition, other jokes combined odd instances of cross-dressing with the theme of marriage, which was discussed in chapter 2. On one occasion, a group of shop floor Racers played a joke on one of their coworkers. One of them dressed up as a mock bride and the entire group staged a wedding for the affianced Racer as "a preview of what's to come." Episodes like this seem to indicate fear about the male identity of these working class Racers outside of the workplace, too. Perhaps this reflects anxiety about the

man looks a bit like a woman at first glance, the costume is actually reminiscent of the kind of clothing that children from affluent families wore in the 19th century.[54] The caption began to explain this curious episode by declaring, "Don't get excited gals, this is definitely not what the well dressed man is wearing this spring."[55] The article went on to explain that the man in the wig was Johnny Paige, a mechanic from department 24D. Paige wore this costume to a dance and was dared by his co-workers to wear it for half an hour at work the next day. The article concluded, "Johnny's not one to pass up a dare (or a fast buck) so this apparition graced 24D the next day." The costume Paige donned played on the same class tension visible in the ballerina example above – the clothing and wig targeted people (specifically, men) from upper-class backgrounds that were, in the eyes of this shop floor worker, effete. The coworkers that dared Paige to wear the costume the next day may very well have shared this implicit view about the dubious masculinity of their more well-to-do peers, which might have even been part of the motivation for challenging him to wear the costume in the workplace.[56] Episodes like this, where working class men appeared publicly in women's clothing or outfits that otherwise mocked the manliness of their white-collar coworkers, demonstrate how rich these workplaces (and Grumman in particular) were as spaces for the creation and contestation of class, gender, and racial identity.

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loss of autonomy associated with marriage (and discussed more fully in chapter 2). See *Republic Aviation News* 25, no. 2 (March 11, 1949): 3.

[54] For example, no less a famous personage than Franklin Delano Roosevelt wore dresses and "long blond curls" until the age of five (which would have been 1887). See James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956): 4.

[55] "Smith's Capers," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no. 9 (April 23, 1953): 5. Interestingly, the author of this column was Irene Smith, one of the people who composed the news and gossip column in its various installments over the years.

[56] Of course, the motivation may have also been simply to embarrass Paige.

Over the course of the 1950s, these complex images of working class men making a variety of commentaries on gender, class, and social conventions gradually disappeared from company publications at Grumman and Republic. The transition was likely due to a combination of factors. In the case of the *Grumman Plane News*, the paper went through a general modification from 1950 to 1960. The appearance of the paper changed, becoming more formal and professional. Managers in personnel seemed to assume a greater role in preparing and/or approving the material that appeared in the pages of the *Plane News*. The gossip pieces gradually faded, though the "Slipstream" column remained, and insider jokes and references continued to appear there regularly. As discussed earlier, the company outsourced the cartoons, though gender and class themes remained popular topics. Despite these changes, the paper remained very popular with readers.[57] Similar changes took place with the appearance of the *Republic Aviation News*, though that publication never had the same informal, insider feel of Grumman's paper to begin with.[58]

[57] One of the standard questions I asked during oral histories was whether employees actually read these company newspapers. The universal response was "yes." For example, regarding the *Grumman Plane News*, John Caruso indicated, "Oh yeah, that was something read all the time. We each got them. Yeah, absolutely. That was a great publication, I've got dozens of them at home. They have every single one here [at the Grumman History Center]." The fact that, as Caruso alludes, the Grumman History Center has preserved nearly every issue of the *Plane News* provides powerful testament to the popularity of the paper. Caruso started with the company in 1964, after the paper had already undergone some of the changes described above. As to why the paper remained popular for so long even after the alterations, Caruso added, "Everyone and his brother had some sort of article in there. I had one in there also, they did a write-up on my work." JC, 3/24/03.

[58] As noted earlier, Grumman's company paper reflected the hypermasculine culture that plays such an important role in my thesis. Although the corporate cultures at Republic and Sperry were both masculine as well, they were less so than Grumman's. For example, Republic's paper featured a column in the post-war period entitled "It's a Woman's World." This was a regular series of articles that actually started during World War II under the moniker "It's a Working Woman's World." The title changed shortly after the end of the war. While many of the topics covered in this series dealt with stereotypical "women's issues" such as cooking and sewing, the fact that this publication featured any space seriously devoted to female readers indicated a different treatment of women than that found at Grumman. Significantly, Republic's paper also lacked many of the kinds of cartoons and gags that set women up as the butt of jokes. The comparison between these two publications in particular is a complex one. Women were still objectified in the pages of the *Republic Aviation News*, a topic explored in more detail in the following

At the same time that the publications of Grumman and Republic were becoming more formal and less familiar, Sperry's company newspaper began featuring one of the more dramatic instances of class-bound masculinity from all three of the corporate cultures under study. During the mid to late 1950s, a series of articles featuring images of male body-builders from the workforce began to appear. A weightlifting club had developed at Sperry, and the articles that reported on its development featured photos of members. The weightlifters were all white men, and all earned their living working in the shop. Unlike the boxers from Grumman during and after World War II, these men actually modeled for pictures. As part of this modeling process, the weightlifters appeared in their workout clothes, or simply in posing trunks.

Along with pictures of the weightlifters that emphasized their bodies, the accompanying coverage of the club often emphasized self-improvement. Figure 3.11 is a photograph of Republic employee Charles Crowley that ran alongside a story entitled "Self-Improvement: One Man's Story."[59] The article profiled Crowley, who had joined the club just eight months earlier, in July 1953. The author noted that when he signed up, "Charley" carried a meager 123 pounds on his 5' 9" frame. He progressed so rapidly under the guidance of his fellow members that Charley quickly won two club-sponsored self-improvement contests, resulting from "a phenomenal increase of 10 ¾ inches in his measurements, mostly in his chest and legs, over a period of six months."[60] Weighing in

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chapter. However, the treatment of women in Republic's paper was different from that of the *Grumman Plane News*. Sperry's paper was generally the most polished and corporate of the three papers from the beginning, though it also (perhaps oddly) featured some of the most interesting examples of gendered culture in the workplace, as discussed below.

[59] "Self-Improvement: One Man's Story," *Sperry News* 11 (March 26, 1954): 6

[60] While this kind of change is dramatic, the article also mentions that in addition to weightlifting, "Charley supplemented his diet with high-protein tablets – as many as 40 per day." This entire weightlifting episode also reflects a trend toward the medicalization of the workplace during this period. Health concerns began to appear in company publications, and each company had a medical staff that worked to promote the

at an impressive 170 pounds, Charley enthused, "I'm just beginning to live. It's been a tremendous morale booster for me." Indeed, in his view, the greatest benefit was not related to the improved physique at all. "The biggest change is in my outlook. Previously I was very depressed and nervous, troubles which stemmed primarily, I guess, from my physical state." In fact, Crowley had become such an enthusiastic booster for the weightlifting club that "roughly 90%" of his department joined the group.

Figure 3.11 "Self-Improvement: One Man's Story"

Accompanying this bullish characterization of the benefits of weightlifting is a picture of Charles Crowley that provides a window into the changing presentation of working class masculinity. Crowley is in the act of lifting weights. He holds a barbell at waist height, preparing to do what looks like a standing press. Most importantly, his body is the focus of the picture. He is wearing a snug bathing suit or posing trunks, plus shoes and socks. His torso, arms, and legs are all on display for the viewer. As the text indicates, Crowley does indeed look like someone who has been spending hours at the

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general health and well-being of workers. In a related development, Charles Atlas remained a very popular self-help guru for young men across the U.S. during this period. The reference to Charles Crowley taking protein supplements suggests that he coached other men on more than just lifting weights. Indeed, Elizabeth Toon and Janet Golden have argued that Charles Atlas came to see himself as a health advisor. Perhaps Crowley was following a similar lead. See Elizabeth Toon and Janet Golden, "'Live Clean, Think

gym. The emphasis of the picture is clearly this employee's body. Moreover, Crowley was a blue-collar employee. He was a tool crib tender, meaning he was responsible for keeping track of tools as other employees took them during the course of the day. His class identity is important here – members of the weightlifting club worked on the shop floor.[61] The display of Crowley's white, muscle-bound physique indicated more than just an exercise in the Horatio Alger-style story of self-improvement. The focus had shifted from workers to bodies, and in particular, to working class bodies. In the face of the emasculating changes occurring in the workplace around them, weightlifters like Charles Crowley became models of a newfound manliness. This signified a transformation in the emphasis of working class masculinity from rough attitudes and behaviors to self-control and self-discipline that resulted in physical development and increased raw power.[62]

Clean, and Don't Go to Burlesque Shows': Charles Atlas as Health Advisor," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, No. 1 (January 2002): 39-60.

[61] Evidence for this comes from descriptions of the members provided in the paper, as well as one of the oral histories. Gabriel Parrish indicated that he knew one of the members of the weightlifting club, who was a sheet metal worker. GP, 8/27/03.

[62] There were a number of other examples of photographs of weightlifters from the club. See "Sperry Barbell Team Competes For Metropolitan Championship," *Sperry News* 15, no. 4 (March 17, 1958): 6. This was a report about an upcoming competition that the weightlifting club was participating in. The track record of the members indicates that the weightlifting club was not an internal affair only, but participated with teams from the surrounding area (including at least one team from a neighboring company, Cooper A.C. of Brooklyn). St. Clair Warner held the Eastern States, the New York State, and Senior Metropolitan weightlifting championships. An experienced lifter, Warner was also an Olympic hopeful. Al Muller held the Senior Metropolitan, Jr. Metropolitan, New York State, and Jr. Olympic championships. LeRoy Hulbert also had an impressive list of titles, including the Jr. Olympic Handicaps, *Daily Mirror* Jr. Olympics, and the Huntington weightlifting championships. Two photographs accompany the article. The first features a professional, studio portrait of Angel Rodriquez, another member of the team. Rodriquez is posing in a swimsuit, and leans against a stool. He is billed as "top body-builder in the Barbell Club," and the article notes he "has received recognition in national magazines." The second picture features four of the club members working out in the company gym. They are all wearing pants, and are shirtless. This article attests to the popularity of weightlifting in the New York and Long Island area during this period, and again illustrates the emphasis placed on workers' bodies as a demonstration of manliness. A similar process occurred with female employees during this period. The company introduced a "Miss Sperry" contest, which also featured women who worked for Sperry posing in bathing suits. Chapter 5 will explore this series of contests in more detail.

During the late 1940s and 1950s, gender and class identities were in flux at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry. The combination of deteriorating labor relations (particularly at Republic), a massive influx of engineers from working class backgrounds at all three companies, and increased automation and managerial oversight led to a change in the meaning of masculinity for white-collar and blue-collar workers. For engineers and other white-collar employees, manliness became more rough and demonstrative. Efforts to prove their masculinity resulted in a kind of hypermasculine culture in the workplace, particularly at Grumman. For shop floor personnel and other blue-collar employees, masculinity came to emphasize physical strength and musculature as evidence of manliness. As we will see in chapter five, the meaning of femininity similarly changed over time. Beauty contestants and amateur models, both drawn from the ranks of Sperry workers, provide further evidence that employers like Sperry played an active part in the larger cultural project of reinventing women as domestic and beautiful in the post-war period. However, not every employee adjusted easily or willingly to the male side of this new gender order.

Worker Identity and Responses to Changing Gender Representations

How did people respond to shifting male gender identities in the fifteen years following World War II? Despite the concerted efforts of many employees (and some employers) to re-masculine roles in the workplace during the post-war period, some other employees reacted ambivalently or with outright disapproval. Moreover, the voices that registered disapproval of manly practices were diverse, as men and women both expressed

ambivalence with the changing notions of masculinity and femininity that confronted them. The views of various women were certainly present in company publications. In addition to writing regular features such as "Thru the Keyhole" and "It's a Working Woman's World," women often had an editorial presence within the papers.[63] Testimony from women such as Catherine O'Regan also enriches the historical record, providing us with a first-hand view of women's experiences and their reactions to encounters with the new forms of manliness.[64] In addition, a number of other, subtler signals suggest that women exerted a certain degree of agency with regard to both workplace relations and identity formation for men and women.[65] As we saw in the previous chapter, a number of women directly challenged men who did not fulfill particular gender expectations. In addition, a number of intriguing illustrations by male cartoonists registered disapproval toward the kinds masculine practices women such as

[63] Both *Sperry News* and *Republic Aviation News* featured women as assistant editors at various points. Despite this, the views of women were still underrepresented within the pages of these publications. My point here is that women's voices were not absent, and when given the opportunity, female contributors would often register open disapproval of the treatment they received, both socially and culturally.

[64] Of course, as with all of the oral histories conducted for this study, some time has passed since the events described. The people I interviewed were relating stories that they have been telling and retelling for as much as sixty years. Obviously, this allows for memories to be rearranged, or selectively retained. An additional layer of editing is also imposed, if you will, by the oral historian, as she or he tries to balance responsibilities to the narrator, as well as the audience. This is a source of lively debates among oral historians. For a recent salvo in favor of editing by the writer, see Rebecca Jones, "Blended Voices: Crafting a Narrative from Oral History Interviews (Critical Essay)" *Oral History Review* 31, no 1 (Winter-Spring 2004): 23-43. Many scholars take the opposite tack, suggesting that oral historians have to beware the dangers of mediation. For example, see Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember: Themes in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Carole Boyce Davies, "Collaboration and the Ordering Imperative in Life Story Production", in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, ed., *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 3-19; and Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, ed., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[65] Examining the agency of repressed groups is an extremely useful project for historians, though the term "agency" threatens to become one of the most overused words in academia today. First popularized by post-colonial studies scholars such as Gyan Prakash, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said, the study of subaltern voices has widely influenced disciplines and fields from Political Science to Sociology to History. The study of subaltern groups (or groups that are repressed) was originally influenced by the work of Antonio Gramsci, who used the term "subaltern" in his *Prison Notebooks*. For a useful overview of the origins of subaltern studies, see Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism" *American Historical Review* 99, no 5 (Dec. 1994): 1475-1490.

O'Regan faced (recall her description of being banned from the shop floor in chapter 2, when a vice president informed her over the phone that women were no longer allowed there). These expressions of empathy demonstrate that the acceptance of the cultural discourse about women and men was not universal among listeners.

Some of the indications of resistance or agency emerged in response to what appears to have been a common practice by some men at all three companies – the display of pin-up art in various guises around the workplace. Pin-up art was popular during the war and even in the decades after. Indeed, *Playboy*, perhaps the most popular medium for pin-up art, began publication in 1953.[66] However, this does not mean that pin-up art met with universal approval. Several cartoons treated what may have been a very serious topic with a light touch.

Once again, the artwork of Fred Dresch provides insightful commentaries on the assorted reactions that male and female workers had to pin-up art. A cartoon from January 1950 (figure 3.12) presents ambiguously critical commentary on the presence of pin-up calendars in the workplace. Two men use a magnifying glass to inspect a tiny piece of paper hanging beneath a giant picture of a blonde haired woman in a bikini. The piece of paper has an illegible month written on it, and one of them confirms, "Yep – it's a calendar!" The joke must be a reference to pin-up calendars from the time. The inference is that the presence of pin-up calendars upset some people in the workplace.[67]

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[66] For more background on the rise of men's magazines (as well as their historical roots), see Bill Osgerby, *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-style in Modern America* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).
[67] There are other examples that demonstrate this must have been an issue in other offices as well. For example, *The Sperry News* featured a Cartoon-of-the-Month illustration of a man with a framed picture of a centerfold model on his desk. Behind him, one man complains to another, "What can we do? He claims it's a picture of his wife?" Editorial jabs like this offer a window onto the growing awareness in the workplace about sensitivity regarding sexist illustrations of women. More specifically, cartoons like this provide examples of the kind of backlash that emerged after the 1970s. In this instance, this artist was

Dresch referred to these objections in this cartoon, though his exact views on the subject are ambiguous. He appears to give the critical point of view some credence. The piece of paper with the month is, after all, comically small in comparison to the accompanying artwork. At the same time, Dresch appears to be deflating or belittling these objections; perhaps even suggesting they are irrelevant or useless. On some level, Dresch seems to send the message that viewers of the time had to resign themselves to the fact that this was "a man's world." However, at the same time, Dresch seems to be lampooning the men who hung calendars such as this in the workplace, suggesting that they were unsophisticated (and therefore, unmanly after all, as discussed in the previous section).

Figure 3.12 "Yep – It's a Calendar!"

Other cartoons referred critically to the kind of harassing social practices that Catherine O'Regan described earlier. In some cases, these cartoons expressed empathy for the women subjected to this treatment. One such example comes from Lum Grum. In figure 3.13, Lum Grum walks past the company mailroom. In a classic case of role reversal (a stock comedy trope), the women in the mailroom harass Lum for a change.

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playing around with the criticism regarding sexist images. See *The Sperry News* 17, no 8 (June 20, 1960):

One whistles, while two more yell “wowee” and “wahoo.”[68] In an explicit reference to the metaphor of “running missions,” the wall of the mailroom contains a tally of how many times each of the women went through the shop (these range from Lil with 14 missions to Barbara with 1,048). For once, it would seem, women have turned the tables, subjecting a man to the experience of objectification. Even if the goal of the women (and, therefore, the artist) was not to objectify this male Grummanite, he certainly experienced being an outsider on some level. In response to these presumably emasculating catcalls, Lum can only turn red with consternation or embarrassment, letting out a meek “gulp.” Someone seeing this cartoon for the first time could very easily miss its meaning. In effect, George Ré gave voice to a group of women who otherwise had little input or access to the pages of the *Plane News*.

Figure 3.13

This is not to say that these women needed “saving” at the hands of a male artist. Catherine O’Regan was not bashful or reticent about discussing the frustrations of being

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[68] “Lum Grum,” *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 19 (September 13, 1951): 3.

a female employee – no one needed to give her a "voice" in that regard. But in illustrations like this, Ré expressed empathy for coworkers such as O'Regan, who went through experiences that he clearly thought of as embarrassing, if not worse. Clearly, not everyone who participated in the corporate culture of these companies agreed with or approved of all of these practices. By extension, then, perhaps commentators such as George Ré were also equivocal about the larger project of returning women to a separate, secondary sphere, as well as the changing nature of masculine and feminine gender roles.

Even though Ré offered critical commentary about gender relations in pieces like figure 3.13, his perspective on workplace conditions was not always critical, either. In addition to these proto-feminist works, he also prepared other cartoons that were far more conventional in their representations of women. For example, one cartoon refers to the famous scene from the film *The Seven Year Itch* in which Marilyn Monroe has her skirt blown up around her waist by a gust of wind from a subway grate. In one installment of Lum Grum, the eponymous protagonist prepares a gag to perform a similar feat. In figure 3.14 a female coworker walks by Lum and some coworkers as she delivers mail. In an image reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe, her skirt is blown up around her knees (though this fictitious female employee is not smiling and laughing, as Marilyn Monroe did in her famous scene). One male character says to another, "Lum's rigged up the air hose again."[69] Examples like this demonstrate that Ré was not beyond objectifying women, or making them the focus of workplace humor.

[69] "Lum Grum," *Grumman Plane News* 8, no 15 (July 21, 1949): 5.

Figure 3.14 “Lum’s rigged up the air hose again.”

Ambiguous cultural clues such as George Ré’s cartoons, which alternately defend or objectify women, indicate that men and women did not universally approve of emerging gender identities during the post-war period. Indeed, as Foucault has pointed out in other contexts, the fact that so much time and energy was devoted to the project of reinforcing separate spheres implies that, in fact, the lives of men and women were much more intertwined, and their gender identities were in much greater flux, than some of these cultural strata might suggest. Artists such as Fred Dresch and George Ré created works that raise questions about whether the cultural messages about recreating gender identities were successful. The contested nature of gender identity was also visible in other workplace episodes such as the ruinous rift within the IAM that led to a wildcat strike at Republic in June 1952.

"An Illegal Stoppage of Work"

In 1951, a power struggle within Local 1987 of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) erupted into the public domain of the workplace at the Republic Aviation Corporation. Two groups fought for control of the union. The first group, a faction led by Leo Leonard (the first Business Agent for the union), defeated the second group, led by Martin Buckley (the pivotal Machinists' organizer), in the first IAM election at Republic. Frustrated, Buckley eventually used his powers as Grand Lodge Representative to depose Leonard's group and install his candidates (the same ones that had lost the election). In response, Leonard's group attempted to wrest back control of the union from Buckley through a series of efforts. They began by filing a lawsuit. When Buckley and IAM lawyers outmaneuvered Leonard's supporters, the latter tried to seize control by organizing a wildcat strike. Leonard's faction followed up this unsuccessful effort by creating an independent union (which ultimately failed to gain traction). Throughout these episodes, both sides attempted to win the battle of public opinion by handing out fliers and mailing letters to union members. Significantly, gender played a double role in this public contest. First, the dissident faction condemned Buckley for betraying the respectable, fraternal masculinity that he and other IAM leaders had espoused during their organizing drive. Second, Leonard's group suggested that Buckley's union was upsetting appropriate gender roles by promoting an incompetent woman into the very important role of office manager for the union. The fact that these arguments met with some success in persuading other union members demonstrates that the IAM had not fully overcome the gendered themes that had created so much trouble when it was attempting to organize these workers in the first place.

The power struggle within the IAM likely took shape during the union's organizing drive. As discussed in chapter two, the IAM won a close NLRB election at Republic in November 1950. The newly formed Local 1987 held elections for Executive Officers one month later. Martin Buckley backed a slate of candidates that lost.[70] The winning candidates included Leo Leonard, who earned a three-year term as Business Agent. So, in terms of timing, this episode builds on the one examined at the end of chapter two.

The trouble between Buckley and the newly elected Executive Board began almost immediately. Both parties attempted to insert supporters into the local office as a means of controlling union finances and activities. At Buckley's suggestion, the union hired Naverine Nelson as Clerk for the Lodge's office on January 15, 1951.[71] Within a matter of weeks the Executive Board, suspicious of Nelson and Buckley, asked Helen O'Neill, Recording Secretary for the Executive Board, to "devote her time to office routine."[72] The idea was to have O'Neill act as a check on Buckley and Nelson, whom the Executive Board worried were still trying to control the Local.

[70] Unfortunately, there is a dearth of documentation from the election in December 1950, and so it is difficult to know how closely Martin Buckley was involved with the losing candidates beforehand. However, subsequent developments suggest that they were associated prior to the election. Given the great amount of time and effort Buckley invested in the organizing drive at Republic, as well as the high hopes he placed on using Republic as a launching pad to organize other Long Island manufacturers, it seems unlikely that he would have left matters to chance. Some evidence for this comes from Leo Leonard and his supporters (though, obviously, the reliability of this source might be questionable). In a signed petition to Arthur J. Hayes, President of IAM, they alleged, "The trial committee was picked on a factional and prejudicial basis, and for the sole reason that they have supported Mr. Buckley constantly in his attempts to disrupt the local Lodge and illegally oust its officers." Petition from Martin A. Newell, et al., to Mr. Arthur J. Hayes, Aug 2, 1951, 2, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. In any event, once Buckley encountered problems with the winning executive officers, he quickly turned to the losing candidates from the December election for backing and assistance.
[71] See deposition of Martin A. Newell, August 22, 1951, page 3, submitted to Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Nassau, in Martin A. Newell, etc., et al., Plaintiffs, against Arthur J. Hayes, etc., et al., Defendants, in Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.
[72] Ibid., page 6. O'Neill was hired on January 28, 1951.

Relations between Buckley and the Executive Board (and within the office) deteriorated rapidly. Both sides appealed to IAM International President A.J. Hayes for support throughout the middle months of 1951. One letter addressed to Hayes by Business Agent Leo Leonard's supporters practically pleaded for Buckley's ouster. Among other things, the note alleged he was crooked and too close with management.[73] In turn, Buckley asserted that Leonard aspired to run the union.[74] According to Buckley, Leonard organized a very nasty little campaign, complete with allegations about a sexual affair between Buckley and Naverine Nelson (including late night phone calls to Nelson's husband, accusing her of having an affair).

The union responded rapidly in an effort to bring the situation under control. Evidently, by this point the Executive Board had become so disruptive or unruly that Hayes felt the need to intervene. In June 1951, he placed Lodge 1987 under receivership of the Grand Lodge and put IAM Vice President Coonley in charge.[75] In turn, Coonley appointed Martin Buckley to run the Local. This was an unusual measure for a union to take, suggesting that the situation was already unmanageable. Judging from what came later, things between Buckley and the Executive Board must have been rather ugly and

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[73] Letter from "members of Lodge 1987" to A.J. Hayes, June 21, 1950, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. The same letter also complained about the union contract, which a number of members found unsatisfactory. The shop was not a closed shop at this point, meaning that people did not have to join the union, but still got the fifteen-cent raise that the union negotiated. Needless to say, this was very embarrassing for union members. The letter observed, "All we hear is, well sucker you joined the union and paid your fee as well as the two dollars per month dues, and we don't belong to the union and get the same as you."

[74] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. Fred C. Coonley June 19, 1951 Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. In this internal correspondence, Buckley asserted that the actions of the Executive Board (hiring O'Neill, etc) were all the machinations of Leo Leonard, who was trying to get Buckley's job and take control of the Local. Interestingly enough, Eugene Burnett corroborated this account in his oral history. Burnett was a union member and one of the organizers of the wildcat strike in 1952. At the time, he believed the strike was over workplace conditions and issues, though subsequent reflection led him to believe it was actually part of a power play by Leo Leonard to take control of the Local.

[75] Letter from A.J. Hayes to Martin A. Newell, et al., August 22, 1951, attached as "Exhibit A" to deposition of Martin A. Newell, submitted to Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Nassau,

personal, suggesting there was perhaps more than just a serious political in-fight underway.

Regardless of whether the conflict was personal or genuinely motivated by union concerns, Buckley seized the opportunity to clean house. In July 1951 Buckley – acting as the IAM receiver – and several other local members (including the defeated candidates from the 1950 election) suspended the Executive Board members and charged each with "conduct unbecoming an officer."[76] The Union Lodge promptly held "trials" of the defendants, presided over by none other than Martin Buckley. The trial committee was, again, the defeated candidates from the 1950 IAM election. The committee summarily declared the defendants guilty, fined them, and expelled them all from the union.[77]

Angry and unwilling to concede defeat, the deposed union leaders responded by filing a lawsuit. The suit, filed in Nassau County Court in August 1951, sought an injunction against Buckley and the reinstatement of the Executives within the local. Despite compelling arguments against Buckley's unfair actions, IAM lawyers maneuvered through a series of trial motions and managed to delay any decision by a judge until after December 1951, when new union elections took place anyway. This rendered the whole lawsuit moot, since the terms in office for all the plaintiffs ended before they could get the matter aired in court.[78]

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in Martin A. Newell, etc., et al., Plaintiffs, against Arthur J. Hayes, etc., et al., Defendants, in Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[76] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to John J. Ryan, August 22, 1951, attached as exhibit D, deposition of Martin A. Newell, submitted to Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of Nassau, in Martin A. Newell, etc., et al., Plaintiffs, against Arthur J. Hayes, etc., et al., Defendants, in Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[77] Memo A.J. Hayes to Mr. Frederick J. Schneider and Mr. Richard Fitzgerald, Aug 23, 1951, 3-5, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. In fact, some of the defendants were even found guilty in abstention. Arnold Barnett and Helen O'Heill were sentenced in abstention because they had left the proceedings in protest. Martin Newell and Cornelius Carey refused to even show up for their trials and were likewise found guilty, fined, and expelled from the union.

[78] Except for Leo Leonard, who had been elected to a three-year term as Business Agent.

Despite this victory, Buckley came under fire from a variety of sources. Nassau County Court referred the case to official referee O.R. Steinbrink, who declared Buckley a tyrant. Steinbrink noted in an official ruling he handed down, "From the moment [Buckley] entered this Lodge as a representative of the International, his was the attitude of a dictator."[79] Adding to the union's embarrassment, local papers printed Steinbrink's characterization and his conclusion, "Republic lodge would be better off if the laboring people constituting it were left to solve their own problems and if the international removed Buckley and sent him elsewhere to exercise his talents."[80] Buckley angrily defended himself against these charges, saying that Judge Steinbrink "blasphemed" him. Buckley added that Steinbrink's declaration of a mistrial was a "definite victory for us … These eight persons are right back where they started a year and a half ago." Interestingly, the deposed Executive Board members also referred to Buckley as a "dictator" in fliers that they subsequently distributed to RACers. In a fascinating turn of events, the rebellious faction attacked Martin Buckley for failing to embody the respectable, fraternal masculinity that the IAM espoused during the organizing campaign. In addition to characterizing Buckley as a "dictator", Leonard's supporters accused him of financial malfeasance with union funds (hardly the action of a loyal brother).[81] Indeed, Buckley's own lawyers even noted in internal correspondence, "There are serious doubts in our mind as to whether or not the constitution [of the union] has been complied

[79] O.R. Steinbrink, Memorandum, Official Referees Kings County, December 15, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[80] "Labor Leader Assails 'Mistrial' Ruling in Ouster of 8 Republic Union Officials," *Nassau Review-Star* Dec 23, 1952: 20, in IAM Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

[81] See "Report to the Membership, Lodge 1987, Republic Aviation," flier posted on bulletin boards at Republic Aviation in September 1951, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

with in the expulsion from office and membership of these plaintiffs."[82] Despite the successful outcome of this case, questions about Buckley's style and ability may have remained in the minds of IAM executives.[83]

Significantly, this struggle over control of the union at Republic Aviation also reflected anxieties about the impact that the IAM's presence was having on gender roles in the workplace, particularly as related to women. Two female union members, Naverine Nelson and Helen O'Neill, assumed a central role in the debate between the dissidents and the union. Buckley chose Nelson as the Local's office manager in January 1951. Weeks later, the dissident faction placed Helen O'Neill in the Local office as a safeguard against Buckley and Nelson. In the struggle for control of the Local, both women received intense (and sometimes very personal) criticism.

Significantly, the condemnation of both women turned on their alleged inability to perform the traditional, female duties of a secretary. In particular, the kinds of complaints that Nelson's critics leveled reveal a great deal about the intricate role that gender played in this power struggle. The deposed Board members accused Nelson of being an agent of Buckley and a bad secretary, to boot. She was unfamiliar with how to use necessary office equipment, she was unorganized when it came to simple tasks like managing membership lists, and she was incompetent at keeping track of money.[84]

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[82] Sturm and Perl, Counsellors at Law to Mr. Fred H. Coonley, "Interim Report: Newell, et al. v. Hayes, et al.," May 6, 1952, from Elmer E. Walker to All Shop Stewards, June 3, 1952: 6. Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. The attorneys added that if the matter ever did come to trial, the defendants would likely lose (although, again, the elections of December 1951 had already taken place, rendering the matter largely moot).

[83] The lead attorney for the case did observe elsewhere, though, that the referee's remarks about Buckley were "utterly unwarranted." Letter from Abraham Fishbein to Mr. A.J. Hayes, Dec 17, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[84] The particular office equipment she was unfamiliar with was a Wheeldex Record, which was a card file machine used to store records. See Deposition of Martin A. Newell, in case of Martin A. Newell, etc., et al., Plaintiffs, against Arthur J. Hayes, etc., et. Al., Defendants, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

Obviously, having a secretary that was unable to perform her secretarial function represented a threat to the smooth and efficient governance of Local 1987.

Moreover, Nelson's critics worried that she disrupted traditional, masculine gender roles, too. In particular, she subverted the efforts of the former Financial Secretary, Mr. Johnson, to perform his elected duties of overseeing the financial affairs of the lodge.[85] As the previous chapter discussed, Republic had heavily gendered work roles during this period. Donald Riehl explained that working with finances was a masculine work role.[86] In this regard, Naverine Nelson represented a double-threat to this traditional male role. First, she was supposed to keep track of finances in the context of the day-to-day operations of the office (collecting dues from members, etc.). This kind of financial administration was properly the provenance of a male worker. Secondly, Nelson interfered with the capacity of a male supervisor to perform his duties as Financial Secretary of the union.

The struggle for control of the IAM at Republic was fundamentally about power within the union (and the workplace), but this struggle also reflected larger concerns about the impact the union had on gender roles within the workplace. As examined in the previous chapter, IAM organizers worked hard to reframe masculinity for Racers as fraternal, rather than individualistic, during the organizing drive at Republic. In the turbulent years that followed, rebellious critics worried that the IAM was also attempting to upset newly imposed gender roles, thereby minimizing gender as a meaningful indicator of a person's place in the workplace hierarchy. To complicate matters further, as discussed above, the meaning of masculinity was also in flux during the early 1950s.

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[85] Ibid.
[86] DR, 7/9/03.

Members of the dissident faction played on all of these gender anxieties in their public pronouncements about Martin Buckley and the IAM. Eventually, each group resorted to public, ugly, personal, and insidiously gendered attacks on members of the opposing party. However, the dissidents appear to have struck first. In addition to accusing Buckley of financial misconduct, they went so far as to imply that he was having an affair with Naverine Nelson (who was also a married woman). The inference was that Buckley was participating in the kind of exaggerated, hypermasculine culture that dominated these workplaces, proving the insincerity of his high-minded emphasis on respectable masculinity during the organizing campaign.

Buckley and the new Executive Board responded to these personal, gendered attacks in kind. First, they attacked the character of the parties that opposed them. Second, they also relied upon the same gendered critique of a woman worker. In September 1951, the Lodge distributed a letter to all members denouncing Newell (the former president and head plaintiff in the lawsuit) as an unreliable drunk. The letter asserted, "Your elected President, prone to drink, was out of the plant about as much as he was in it, and you the membership was paying for his lost time."[87] Nor was Newell the only executive with a drinking problem. "He and his trusted trustee, Leo Leonard, were seen in taverns drinking, and M. Newell appeared in the union office intoxicated."

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[87] Letter from "The Executive Board, Lodge 1987" to "Dear Member", date stamped September 18, 1951, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. By way of justifying the extreme measure of publicly defaming Newell and the other expelled officers, IAM Vice President Coonley sent a copy of this letter to all Grand Lodge Representatives in the Northeastern States Territory, along with an explanation. Coonley claimed that the dissident faction was connected to the CIO, and that the CIO was attempting to use the troubles at Republic as a propaganda coup in other, competing elections with the IAM. He wrote, "This group of expelled officers, and their attorney who represents the UAW-CIO, are resorting to the lowest moral tactics we have ever experienced. They are wallowing deep in the filth and mire as is characteristic of this type of people." Coonley's reason for sending this material to Grand Lodge Representatives was to make sure that "If any rival organization in a campaign should raise this issue [the troubles at Republic], and in order that you may be in a position to counter it, I am … giving the true picture of conditions as they

The letter further countered that Leonard and Newell were actually the frivolous spendthrifts, squandering nearly a thousand dollars "with little or no explanation."[88]

Critically, Buckley and the new Executive Board also asserted that Helen O'Neill was equally prone to drink, and was really the incompetent secretary that was taking money from the union. O'Neill's alleged ineptitude was evident almost immediately. "Soon after she started to work in the Union Office at the suggestion of president Newell, her inability to handle simple clerical duties soon became apparent." Indeed, her inability to function as a secretary rendered her worse than useless. She was actually a distraction to other people. "As Recording Secretary, she required the assistance of Mrs. Nelson, office manager, to phrase the minutes of Lodge Meetings from her sketchy notes." However, the problem extended beyond mere ineffectiveness. Money began to disappear, too. "In honesty checks, $2.00 was actually taken from her daily receipts in front of witnesses. She balanced her daily sheets without complaining or showing a shortage." Concerned about the implications of this incident, Buckley's supporters investigated further. "As a double check, money was taken at a later date, in the sum of $6.00. Again her work sheets balanced without complaint."[89] In other words, O'Neill

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are." Letter from Fred H. Coonley to Grand Lodge Representatives, Sep 18, 1951, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[88] This was an important point, since the dissident group claimed repeatedly that Buckley and Nelson spent large sums of Local 1987's money on unnecessary equipment (such as a Wheeldex Recorder) or on non-Local business (such as organizing other plants on Long Island).

[89] Clearly, this debate had become quite ugly. Joseph Tone (another IAM official) offered one interesting possibility as to why this contest had turned so nasty. In a letter to IAM VP Fred Coonley, Tone claimed, "these people … have been taught to keep aloof of unions. … They view membership along a material line as they are devoid of any social thinking." According to Tone, this was the source of the trouble between the two factions. (Tone's account might have some merit – one of the central criticisms of the dissident faction was that Martin Buckley was using Local 1987's dues money to support his organizing campaigns at other factories.) Tone went on to suggest that if the IAM started a planned Labor Institute, some of the Local members might finally have some of their "rough edges" filed off. Letter from Joseph M. Tone to Fred E. Coonley, December 18, 1951, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. Tone's insistence that "these people" were anti-union offers further evidence that the dissident faction was uneasy with the various impacts that the union was having on the workplace, including altering gender relations.

could not balance a financial statement. Her accusers did not go so far as to suggest she was taking money, though the implication was certainly possible.

The critique of O'Neill is particularly interesting because it reflects both sets of gender concerns that played into the power struggle between the old and new Executive Boards. First, O'Neill clearly cannot be trusted with finances. Whether her errors were innocent or malicious (and the letter clearly implies the latter), O'Neill's efforts to intervene in the appropriate male world of finance have turned out poorly. Second, O'Neill was equally incompetent at her gender-prescribed role of secretary. In fact, she was so incompetent she needed the help of the other, embattled secretary just to perform the most basic of secretarial functions. These critiques of O'Neill are particularly noteworthy because of their source. For the first time, Buckley's faction was invoking the same gender norms and concepts as Leonard's group. The reason (or reasons) for this change in discourse are not entirely clear. Perhaps Buckley and the new Executive Board were concerned that the gendered appeals of Leo Leonard and the ousted Executive Board were gaining traction among Local members.[90]

New IAM elections in December 1951 only exacerbated the tension between Buckley's and Leonard's groups further. Months of controversy and more legal action over elections for Business Agents and Auditors compelled the national union to intervene once again. In April 1952, the IAM placed Local 1987 under full supervision

[90] The appearance of these gendered criticisms of Helen O'Neill in this particular document might also reflect the hand of a different author. Since the letter is simply signed "The Executive Board, Lodge 1987," the precise authorship is difficult to assess. If the writer was one (or even several) of the new Executive Board members, his (or their) deployment of gender norms as part of a challenge to Helen O'Neill might have represented another expression of the strongly gendered workplace culture that was emerging at Republic, as examined above.

at the request of the new Executive Officers.[91] Once again, Martin Buckley received broad latitude to run the Local.[92]

Frustrated in their attempts to control the union through legal means, the dissident faction resorted to less orthodox methods. In June 1952, Leo Leonard and his supporters organized a wildcat strike at Republic. Capitalizing on perceptions that Buckley and his supporters were too cozy with management, Leonard and his small group engineered an unauthorized walkout. Though brief, this raucous affair brought Leonard's faction face-to-face with the IAM's top executives for the first time. Infuriated by developments, the union summoned the dissidents to Washington, D.C. for a meeting during the strike. Eugene Burnett was one of the wildcat organizers who attended this gathering. When I asked him why they were called to the meeting in D.C., Burnett suggested, "Well, I think the international union wanted to see who these guys were who had the capacity to shut down Republic [with a wildcat strike]. We shut it down, tight, seven guys." When I asked how he became a member of the wildcat organizers, he offered the following observations:

> EB: How I got involved with them was I ran for shop steward and became a shop steward. We were all shop stewards. And as I look back now in a more mature overview, this guy Leo Leonard wanted to be the head of the union here.
> SP: Wanted to be president of the local?

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[91] For the request from the Local to the IAM, see letter from Frederick J. Schneider to Mr. Fred H. Coonley, April 14, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. Less than two weeks prior to this, the IAM sent a letter to Frederick Schneider (the new President of Local 1987) reassuring him that the new executives may "look forward to supervision and assistance from Grand Lodge. Complete supervision and control will be ordered should this situation become worse." See letter from Fred H. Coonley to Mr. Frederick J. Schneider, April 4, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[92] These problems with conducting elections continued throughout the year, and Buckley was even compelled to ask Coonley for his support in writing in advance of a contentious general membership meeting. Letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. Fred H. Coonley, Oct 14, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

> EB: That's right. He was the one; we were his guys, so to speak. He had all these issues how, you know, we were being sold out by the union and it needed him and so forth and so on.[93]

Burnett's observations provide insight into the size of the group involved (which was actually fairly small) and the aspirations of Leo Leonard (confirming that Martin Buckley was not simply paranoid). Burnett's reflection also suggests the amount of influence this group exerted at Republic. Even though they did not ultimately succeed, the fact that seven men orchestrated a wildcat strike suggests an impact disproportionate to their size.

Unfortunately, the contents and results of the D.C. meeting are unclear. Burnett could not recall anything specific about the encounter. When I attempted to probe a bit further as to what might have been discussed, he offered the following insight into the underlying motivations for the strike:

> EB: Well, it was that we were dissatisfied with the union's relationship with management, so we took it into our own hands. And that's why, if I remember, why the international, um, the national union, they […]
> SP: So you said there was dissatisfaction with the union's relationship with management. Were they perceived as being too cozy?
> EB: Yes, the union wasn't adequately representing our interests. And so we took matters into our own hands. And it was all a part of the political *thang* [emphasis Burnett's] that was going on with Leo Leonard and the present leadership of the local union. He wanted to be in charge, so he was presenting us with all kinds of stuff about how they were not respecting him and so forth, and not behaving democratically, and that he was really the candidate of the people. And in a way he proved it.

Regardless of the IAM's diplomatic tact with the wildcat strike organizers, the union and the company evidently managed to regain control of the situation without having to grant any concessions. Beginning on June 3, IAM leaders in Washington whipped off a series of telegrams informing workers at Republic that they were involved

[93] EB, 4/6/2005.

in an “illegal stoppage of work,” and informing Republic’s management that Buckley was in charge of the Local once again.[94] Against the backdrop of the Korean War, the company also appealed directly to workers’ patriotism and urged them to return to work. Within days, workers had returned to the assembly line to turn out more Thunderjets for the Air Force.

Frustrated once more in their efforts to seize control of the Local, Leo Leonard’s faction resorted to one last, desperate attempt. In July 1952 they tried forming a rival, independent union at Republic. The Brotherhood of Aeronautical Workers distributed a newsletter urging Racers to abandon the corrupt IAM and join them. Various RACers provided testimonials in support of the breakaway movement. Many of these testimonials came from workers who were not members of Leo Leonard’s group, suggesting that some sentiment supported the idea of replacing the IAM. Harry Eichler, a Steward, alluded to the perceived cozy relationship between the union and management when he observed, “Who ever heard of a Union that stands by and waits for a company to take action … I want a Union strong enough to stand up for its membership.”[95] The emphasis on strength here is interesting, suggesting that the close relationship with management had emasculated the union. Arthur Kennedy of 08 Shop insisted that only a change in leadership would work, adding, “If you are interested in job security, and a

[94] The union sent telegrams to the new Executive Board and all shop stewards, insisting that the stoppage be terminated immediately. See telegram from Elmer E. Walker to Frederick J. Schneider, et.al., June 3, 1952, and telegram from Elmer E. Walker to All Shop Stewards, June 3, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. The union also sent a separate set of telegrams to Republic, informing management that Martin Buckley was being given “full authority … to direct the affairs of the Lodge.” See telegram from Elmer E. Walker to Mr. John Ryan, June 3, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. In addition, the IAM created and began distributing a Local newspaper at Republic to counteract the “rebellious groups.” Letter from Fred H. Coonley to Mr. A.J. Hayes, Int’l Pres’t, July 29, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.
[95] “As We See It,” *WEFT (Wings, Engine, Fuselage, Tail)* 1, no. 1 (July 1952):2, in Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. To aide workers in joining the new union, the newsletter came with sign-up cards and return envelopes.

Union that makes sure of it … Form your own Union … Join the Brotherhood." Other, established members of the Leo Leonard faction participated in this drive, too. Eugene Burnett added, "I fought for the backing of our contract. This backing we could not get from IAM … There is nothing wrong with the present contract or Republic that Brotherhood can't fix."[96]

The Local, under the receivership of Buckley once again, responded with a spirited denunciation of the breakaway movement.[97] By June 1953, the IAM had restored order sufficiently to finally end its supervision of Local 1987.[98] So, Local 1987 limped along for the remainder of the 1950s, orchestrating two other strikes that were actually sanctioned by the national headquarters. However, the damage was already done. Labor relations at the company remained poor, the union remained incapable of maintaining a cohesive relationship with both workers and management, and the company lost a big contract in 1963 anyway, initiating a slow, painful decline over the next twenty-five years. The lost contract in 1963 was directly attributable to labor

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[96] Ibid. Burnett is identified as "Gene Burnett, 02 Shop IAMs Elected Auditor." Burnett confirmed that he was elected to audit the Local's finances. During his oral history, he joked, "Well we were auditing the books, as if we had the ability to do that. [We both laugh] And we would go down on main street in Farmingdale Village, and we would meet there, and we were auditing the books. I don't know what our conclusions were or whatever, I never even saw a book, much less to audit it." EB, 4/6/2005.

[97] In April 1952, the Executive Board, in the wake of further controversy and lawsuits around new elections, asked the IAM to assume full supervision again. Predictably, the union responded by placing Buckley in charge of the Local once more. See letter from Frederick J. Schneider to Mr. Fred H. Coonley, April 14, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. Subsequently, Buckley responded to the breakaway union movement by suspending more Local members. See letter from Martin J. Buckley to Mr. A.J. Hayes, July 9, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72.

[98] However, this was still not the end of the troubles. An exchange in July 1953 between IAM Vice President Hayes and Maria Staniszewski, a new officer of Local 1987, reveals that internal squabbling was still hampering the effectiveness of the union. See letter from Maria Staniszewski to Mr. A.J. Hayes, President, July 8, 1953, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. Her letter, which was lengthy and detailed in its complaints, noted that, "Union morale in the plant is very low," and practically begged Hayes to intervene. In response, Hayes expressed regret that the internal squabbling was still going on. See letter from A.J. Hayes to Maria Staniszewski, July 16, 1953, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Reel 72. Hayes concluded, "I am definitely convinced that all of the controversy existing within the Lodge emanates from petty jealousies and differences. In some cases it results from a conflict of personalities and frustrated aspirations."

relations, since the Air Force decided to award the contract to a competitor, and specifically sited labor issues in the decision.

In conclusion, part of the difficulty for the union related to the perceived impact of the IAM on gender relations. Clearly, a variety of factors combined to weaken and undermine the union's credibility among Racers, including gender. The campaign that the rebellious ex-officers organized was vicious and personal, as seen in the literature they distributed. But the particular kinds of criticisms that they leveled are revealing. Buckley's detractors accused him of betraying his beloved respectable masculinity. Worse, they suggested he had poor character and was a hypermasculine man. Both sides went further, accusing Naverine Nelson or Helen O'Neill of being an incompetent secretary. In this instance, gender was not a marginal component to the debate, but was central. The union was criticized for placing a woman in a position of influence that she was unqualified for (despite the fact that it was a "woman's job"). Worse still, Nelson also prevented men from performing their "men's jobs" while she was the union secretary. The union came under fire for a variety of factors that reveal the connections between gender and power that existed in these workplaces during the 1950s.

Chapter 4: Problems of Perception: Masculinity, Job Security, and the Decline of Unions in Post-war America

Introduction

In February 1950, Grumman's company newspaper, the *Grumman Plane News*, printed a cartoon by one of its regular contributors, Fred Dresch. The joke is full of codes that reveal (and revealed) a great deal to the initiated reader. The single panel (Figure 4.1) features two women on benches set on opposite sides of a room. The one on the right conforms to Western ideals of beauty – she is tall, thin, and blonde. In comparison, the woman on the left is homely – heavier, shorter, with her hair hidden under a headscarf or veil, suggestive of someone from the Old World. Against this backdrop, two men play out a comic drama. One man drags another man away from the tall, blonde woman toward the homely woman. He scolds the reluctant suitor, "No! No! Comrade – Olga Pushkin has Seniority." An overhead banner provides the punch line: "Red Star Matrimonial Bureau."[1]

This joke, written by one company employee and intended for others, encodes the anxiety of many workers at Grumman regarding the dangers of labor unions. The cartoon clearly plays on one popular anxiety from the era: Communism. Tapping into a larger, national discourse about communism and American politics, Dresch suggested that union members were Communists, and that Communists represented a threat to courtship rituals.

[1] Fred Dresch, "Red Star Matrimonial Bureau," *Grumman Plane News* 9, No 3 (Feb 2, 1950): 4.

Figure 4.1 "No! No! Comrade – Olga Pushkin has seniority!"

In addition, the cartoon reveals a deeper concern: that labor unions might affect gender roles negatively. Against the backdrop of the hypermasculine decades of the 1950s and 1960s, episodes like this went beyond comic hand wringing about Communism and dismissed union membership as a threat because it simultaneously empowered women and emasculated men. Here, Olga Pushkin was a stand-in for any woman who might be able to take advantage of union membership and gain some control over her life. Likewise, Dresch worried that a union would emasculate men by hampering their pursuit of beautiful women. In some ways, this cartoon reveals a great deal about the underlying concerns that created so much trouble for unions in the Long Island aircraft industry.

This chapter adds to the study of the decline of union membership in the United States by looking at the way that sensitivity about gender, labor relations, and job security affected perceptions of unions. People living and working on Long Island seriously worried about the way that a union's presence would impact their lives. As outlined in earlier chapters, despite these obstacles, the UE (later the IUE) and IAM succeeded in

organizing workers at Sperry and Republic. However, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, workers at Grumman staunchly resisted union organizers. The effect of gender on public perceptions of unions (both at non-union shops like Grumman and elsewhere) has not received sufficient scholarly attention.

This chapter begins by examining some of the problems of perception that plagued unions throughout the 1950s. Locals occasionally became scapegoats. For example, the IAM received undue blame from workers and other observers for problematic labor relations at Republic (to a lesser extent, this dynamic appeared at Sperry, too). Criminal scandals also hurt the standing of many unions during the 1950s, including the IUE at Sperry. Next, the negative impact of strikes on perceptions of the IUE and IAM are examined. Some members blamed their unions for striking because it threatened their economic security. A spirited exchange of views between the wives of some striking workers reveals that gender played an important role for union families, too.

The final section focuses on the perceived impact of unions on gender identity for men who worked at Grumman. Moving into the late 1950s and 1960s, the male employees at Grumman worried that a union might interfere with the more demonstrative style of white-collar masculinity that developed there during the mid-1950s (a change traced in the previous chapter). A union could have potentially impacted masculinity in two ways. First, by limiting the amount of supervision that engineers and professionals had over shop floor personnel, a union would decrease the engineers' sense of autonomy and control. Simultaneously, some white-collar employees used interactions with blue-collar workers as a means of reinforcing a sense of rugged manliness for themselves. If a

union curtailed the ability of engineers and managers to work alongside mechanics, this activity would no longer be available to help strengthen their masculinity. Collectively, these problems of perception had a significant impact on the unions at Sperry and Republic, and continued to deter Grummanites from joining organized labor.

Unions and Labor Relations

As outlined in the previous chapter, workers worried about the impact of unions on gender roles, particularly masculinity. In addition, some workers believed that unions such as the IAM actually interfered with labor relations, making conditions worse for more personnel. Critics suggested the IAM was to blame for tense labor relations at Republic because it prevented management from practicing the kind of corporate paternalism that made Grumman's labor relations so successful. Even though IAM Local 1987 was able to overcome its well-documented internal troubles (examined in the previous chapter) by the mid-to-late-1950s, labor relations remained poor between management and workers. Despite the fact that management demonstrably contributed to this situation, these developments further weakened the union's image among members at the time. In addition, IUE Local 450 at Sperry went through a series of scandals involving financial malfeasance by executive officers that sullied its image. In general, unions in the United States suffered from poor public relations between the mid-1950s and early 1960s, and the two unions under examination here were no exception.

Labor relations were quite different among the three companies under consideration. Catherine O'Regan provided some comparative evidence regarding the nature of employee relations at Republic and Grumman, and the role that a union might have played in the contrast. O'Regan's sister worked at Republic during the period O'Regan was employed at Grumman. Her sister worked in purchasing, performing "strictly office work." [2] When I asked O'Regan if her sister ever discussed her experiences at Republic, O'Regan initially answered, "No, because it was just a job." I followed-up with the statement, "One of the things I'm interested in are the differences between Grumman and Republic." O'Regan responded, "Only because of the union, there was a difference in attitude. They [Republic] were not as paternalistic. I guess they had athletic teams like we did, but I wouldn't know about that because they were always all-male. But they just had a different attitude and I think that's the reason they had the union, because they didn't go out of their way to show great affection for their employees." Here we see some indication of how workers at different companies might have compared notes with one another, forming impressions about which employer was better. Also critical here is the way O'Regan has framed the presence of the union at Republic – it was necessary because the company was not sufficiently paternalistic in its employee relations. Further complicating matters, the presence of the union possibly even prohibited management from fostering the kind of paternalism that was so successful at Grumman ("because of the union, there was a difference in attitude").

Other workers shared O'Regan's positive assessment of the successful corporate paternalism that distinguished Grumman from Republic. Donald Riehl worked for Republic from 1951-1964 (excluding two years of military service in Korea), at which

[2] KO, 7/10/2003.

point he went to Grumman. When I asked him for his perceptions about why people at Grumman chose not to unionize, he said, "It was very paternalistic. They did a lot for the people, not only salary and benefits, but they would match, if the union got Republic a raise, then you could bet that a month later Grumman would get basically the same increase."[3] Riehl was very candid in his description of Grumman as paternalistic. Like O'Regan, Riehl clearly considered paternalism a positive attribute.

Other oral histories reflect even more specific misgivings about the impact of the IAM on labor relations at Republic. The previous chapter examined the reflections of William Wait, who worked at Republic from 1944-1984. When I observed that he started before the IAM organized workers, he offered a reflection on the way that the union disrupted labor relations. Prior to the arrival of the IAM, "In most cases where you were talking with old-time people, you could talk to them and you could get them to do what you wanted to do without going through a lot of paperwork …"[4] However, the arrival of the IAM established an extra layer of protective bureaucracy between engineers and shop floor personnel. Wait expressed regret over the arrival of the union, but concluded, "So, I didn't have any real problems with it. There were some people who did, who just wanted to say, 'This is the way it's going to be and you better do it,' and it didn't work." Again, the interesting aspect of these observations is Wait's belief that the IAM impaired labor relations by making the work of engineers more difficult (this also reflects the argument explored above that engineers worried about the impact of unions on identity formation).

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[3] DR, 7/9/2003. The next section will return to one of the developments that Riehl identified here – the phenomenon of non-union companies granting raises to compete with union shops (and thereby discouraging unionization).
[4] WW, 4/15/2005.

In fairness, labor relations at Republic were generally poor prior to the IAM's arrival. Indeed, as explored previously, the imperfect management culture at Republic aided Machinist organizers. William Wait also acknowledged this situation. Despite management's commitment to keeping unions out, they did not actually establish a good rapport with workers, a situation that continued (or perhaps even worsened) after the arrival of the IAM. Since Wait started working at Republic before the union organized, his observations offer meaningful insight into the developments that brought the IAM into the workplace to begin with. He reflected, "[The IAM] had several elections before they finally won. And I think that it may have been partially due to the same high-handed attitude of the management, that 'we're not gonna have a union here, we're treating you well, don't vote for them.' But ultimately they did win."[5] Wait's reference to the "same high-handed attitude" recalls an earlier point in the discussion, when Wait offered his own theory as to why Grumman and Republic managed to alienate their respective customers (the Navy and Air Force). He explained, "The same thing happened to [Grumman] that happened to Republic in that our management seemed like they were quite high-handed with the customer. 'Here's our airplane, it's a wonderful airplane, it'll do everything you want, you better buy it.'"[6] The difference was that Grumman's relationship with the Navy really soured in the 1970s, whereas Republic began losing Air Force support during the 1950s.

[5] For Wait, the entry of the union was a source of frustration. He immediately added, "I was sorry to see it." The problem with the union, according to Wait, was that it added extra layers of bureaucracy and paperwork to the interaction between engineers and shop floor personnel. This was a source of frustration for engineers such as Wait. This was a common concern expressed by employees, particularly white-collar employees such as engineers, as a reason to reject unions altogether or lament their arrival at a given workplace. The class element of this dynamic was made explicit when Wait added, "I think that basically the union appealed to the lower echelon of the factory workers."
[6] WW, 4/15/05. Indeed, documentary evidence of this demeaning attitude can be found elsewhere as well.

Additional oral testimony indicates that continuing poor labor relations at Republic during the 1950s and 1960s were not wholly due to the IAM's presence, but resulted from management blunders, too. For example, Donald Riehl, the former Republic and Grumman employee quoted earlier, offered some insight into the question of why relations between labor and management were so bad at Republic. He initially responded that he was too low in the company hierarchy to know what factors led to the poor relationship. But after a moment, he suggested that one of the problems might have to do with Republic's management.

> The president of the company was a … sort of a … aristocratic kind of guy. His name was Mundy Peale. Even the name would tell you something, that he was more a starched-collar kind of thing. And he gave a speech to the assembled masses one day in which he, I recall this quite vividly, he referred to the fact, he was talking about raises and salaries and so forth, and he says, "I know the cost of a pound of butter, too." You know, like, sure you do, Mundy. That didn't go over too big, that was something they sort of threw up at him whenever the occasion demanded.[7]

Mundy I. Peale was president of RAC from 1947 to 1964, when he quit (or perhaps was forced out) in the wake of Fairchild's takeover of the company.[8] Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Republic's management made a series of missteps, ultimately contributing to the company's decline.[9] Gaffes like these may have also inadvertently fueled class antagonism, thereby energizing sentiment for unionization.

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[7] DR, 7/9/03.

[8] See "Republic Aviation Shifts," *New York Times*, Jan 3, 1947: 43 and "Peale Quits Republic Aviation; Four-Man Unit to Run Concern," *New York Times*, Sep 9, 1964: 57. Peale started with RAC in 1939 and quickly worked his way up the ranks of management. He was the director of Republic's Indiana Division plant at Evansville during World War II.

[9] See Joshua Stoff, "Grumman Versus Republic: Success and Failure in the Aviation Industry on Long Island," *Long Island Historical Journal* 1, no. 2, 114.

Nor was this the only example of alienating behavior that Riehl described. He also talked about "strange perks" that the executives at both Republic and Grumman enjoyed. Republic in particular was noteworthy for having a barber shop on the premises during the period of the Korean War. As Riehl explained, however, "Only, of course, for management, not for the poor machinist. His hair could grow for all they care." The presence of an executives-only barber shop on company premises was another source of alienation for the majority of the workforce that did not have access. As Riehl commented, "That was sort of unique, I don't know if anybody ever mentioned that, but that was certainly something that didn't go without notice." The two examples from Riehl's oral history provide some insight into class relations at Republic, particularly after WW II. Executives enjoyed a different status and privilege that was readily visible to other employees.[10] Also, his characterization of the company's president as aristocratic and unable to meaningfully connect with the workers despite his own best efforts helps to explain why the idea of collective bargaining was appealing to so many employees.[11]

Peale made other odd remarks over the years, further illustrating ways he might have alienated some listeners. The July 1954 issue of *Fortune* magazine reprinted a portion of a commencement address that Peale delivered to a class of college graduates.

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[10] This was something that also applied specifically to the aforementioned Mundy Peale. Even newspaper accounts of him contained veiled references to elitism or class distinctions between himself and other employees. This was something that continued.

[11] Indeed, Republic's management still seemed out of touch with workers and naïve – or willfully ignorant – to the meaning of collective bargaining even after IAM Local 1987 was established. For example, in 1952 a union representative contacted the Suffolk County Department of Health to register a complaint on behalf of the membership about the drinking water at Republic. In response, RAC sent a letter to the director of the department instructing him that the collective bargaining agreement "contains no reference to drinking water." This prompted one Grand Lodge Representative to observe drolly, "labor relations in this company certainly are governed by one who knows little or nothing about collective bargaining." See letter from John J. Ryan to Mr. C. A. Niles dated May 21, 1952 and letter from Reginald T. Anderson to Mr. A. J. Hayes dated July 3, 1952, in Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, roll 340.

In an effort to defuse the economic insecurity that demoralized so many Republic employees, Peale observed, “Many business leaders are genuinely concerned with the very heavy emphasis that younger men are now placing on the matter of security … their concern is not for what an individual may get but what an unbalanced reliance upon security may do to the individual himself.”[12] Rhetoric like this surely did not win Peale much support from rank and file members of Republic’s workforce. At a time when Republic was looking at layoffs, the company’s president was delivering commencement speeches insisting that young men worried too much about job security.[13]

Moreover, Mundy I. Peale was not the only executive or manager who may have contributed to Republic’s poor labor relations. Indeed, part of the problem at Republic was consistent infighting and instability within the ranks of management. Prior to working for Sperry, Merven Mandel spent three years at Republic during the 1950s. He described working at Republic as “pretty bad.”[14] When asked why, Mandel explained, “The various management levels of Republic fought with each other continuously. It was a very unpleasant working environment.” The instability specifically impacted labor

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[12] “Advice Makes *Fortune*,” *Republic Aviation News* 35, no 7 (July 23, 1954): 2. This quote was “part of the advice given June graduates by Mundy I. Peale in a commencement address at the Clarkson College of Technology.” *Fortune* magazine was so impressed that the editors “considered Peale’s remark one of the top admonishments given the Class of ’54.” If young people were worried about job security during this period, the concern was hardly undue. Not long before Peale’s commencement address, a Sperry publication featured an article that was bound to raise questions for new hires. The profile, written by a vice-president and general sales manager for Sperry Gyroscope, opened, “In this era of emphasis upon economic security, it might seem paradoxical that a sizeable segment of personnel at the Sperry Gyroscope Co. division is devoted to the goal of working itself out of a job. Nevertheless, such is the constant aim of the field service engineering force, the customer schools, and the men in field maintenance methods.” G.S. Starke, “The Corps with a Singular Goal,” *Sperryscope* 12, No. 4 (Winter 1951).

[13] With the end of the Korean War in 1953, Republic was surely abuzz with rumors of layoffs in 1953-54. The aircraft manufacturing industry was notorious for layoffs as production demands ebbed and flowed. Predictably, layoffs did begin in 1954. By 1955, 12,000 people (or roughly forty percent of the workforce) had been let go. Interestingly, the remaining 18,000 workers still represented 2,000 more people than the company employed at the peak of World War II. See “Republic Lays Off 1,200,” *New York Times* Sep 17, 1955: 35.

[14] MM, 7/2/2003. Mandel was not sure of the exact dates of his employment at Republic, though he definitely worked there for a three year period sometime between 1953 and 1959, which fits nicely with the period under consideration here.

relations, too. In a court document submitted in 1962, representatives for IAM Local 450 observed that "The company has found it advisable to make frequent changes in its top echelon of Labor Relations Directors, so that during the period [1951-1962] there has been a succession of five Labor Relations Managers."[15] Despite the blunders and turnover from management, the IAM suffered from a generally poor image during the 1950s. Some of the local's difficulty may have well been a kind of public relations hangover resulting from the internal troubles outlined in the previous chapter.

In addition to the IAM, IUE Local 450 at Sperry suffered from poor public relations during this period. In particular, a series of scandals tarnished the local's reputation. Accusations of corruption and malfeasance accompanied a two-year internal dispute, which finally came to a head in November 1956 when John J. Sarle defeated incumbent Joseph Fitzgerald to become president of the local. Two months later, Sarle tried ex-president Fitzgerald and two other high-ranking ex-officials (former vice-president John Diffley and former secretary William J. Fay) and expelled them from the union. Subsequently, all three were indicted on larceny charges for embezzling hundreds of dollars in union funds.[16]

As if this scandal was not enough, IUE International President James B. Carey had to initiate a separate investigation into Sarle's administration just months later, in May and June of 1957. A doctor connected with the Long Island Institute of Health, a clinic for members of Local 450, was indicted on grand larceny charges for falsely

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[15] Sturm & Perl, Esqs., "Exhibit 2: Before a Presidential Board of Inquiry … Statement of Position," submitted June 11, 1962, in James C. Hill Series 3: National Emergency Boards documents, 1961-1964, 5538 Bx 133, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, M.P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University.

[16] "Three Ex-Officials Held in Union Fund Gyp," *Long Island Press*, December 5, 1957.

collecting fees from members.[17] The doctor alleged that Sarle and two other top officers had attempted to extort a kickback from him.[18] Sarle issued strong denials and survived the scandal long enough to lose the next election (to the candidate that had acted as Fitzgerald's attorney in the earlier union trial, no less). Episodes like these, complete with sensational local newspaper coverage, certainly did not help the IUE's image. In an effort to control the damage, one local CIO official tried to put a positive spin on the scandal, noting, "This [the ouster of Fitzgerald, etc.] is proof in the face of all the union investigations being carried on by various bodies, that unions can clean their own houses."[19]

Other unions capitalized on Local 450's in-house problems. Internal correspondence from the IUE indicates that the IAM used the Fitzgerald and Sarle episodes to discredit the IUE during a jurisdictional dispute between the two unions in Utica, NY in 1957. A representative from Local 450 was sent to Utica as part of an effort to recruit workers at another Sperry Rand division there. An internal IUE memo observed that the scandals in Local 450 were thrown up by the IAM to discredit this recruiter. The anonymous IUE author lamented, "Our effort to maintain a high level of ethics in the Administration of our local unions was exploited by the IAM and cast in an improper light during our campaign at Utica."[20]

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[17] "Three Ousted Union Officers Deny Misusing Funds," *Newsday*, December 5, 1957.
[18] Handwritten statement from Albert O. Rossi, May 24, 1957, in International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, President's Office, Records: James B. Carey, ca. 1938-1965, Box 84, folder 2, District 4 – Local 450 – Joseph Fitzgerald, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.
[19] "Three Ex-Officials Held in Union Fund Gyp." The source for this quote, Emil Lindahl, was the president of the Nassau-Suffolk CIO Council. Lindahl's reference to union corruption and investigations by other bodies will be discussed in more detail below.
[20] Memo to James Carey labeled "Re: Local 450 – Sperry Rand at Utica and IAM. Background," in International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, President's Office, Records: James B. Carey, ca. 1938-1965, Box 103, folder 3, Carey Meeting with Meany, re: IUE Local 450 Jurisdictional Dispute, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

The way that the IAM capitalized on the IUE's in-house troubles is illustrated in a flier that they circulated to workers in Utica. Under the banner "Which is Who?" a cartoon of a man with two heads double-talks to workers in Long Island and Utica. On the one hand, this nameless IUE recruiter threatens the Long Island workers, suggesting that the International might take over the Local if they do not get their affairs in order. On the other hand, he reassures workers in Utica that they will enjoy total autonomy and a free hand in deciding their own affairs. The accompanying text urges Utica workers, "DON'T BE MISLED." Dismissing the "slick character" as a "phoney baloney from Long Island," the IAM tried (perhaps disingenuously) to play on local concerns about being compromised by a large, centrally organized union. In a direct reference to the internal political troubles within Local 450, the text continued, "While this poor soul was here on what he thought was a 2 day vacation paid for by the i.u.e. internationale they stabbed him in the back. Yes while he was here the internationale seized and took control of his local union in Long Island. They have 'frozen' the funds of the local and have put all the affairs and business of the local under Jim Carey's control." Although the identity of this recruiter is unclear, the last observation about him losing control of the union suggests it might have even been John Sarle.[21]

In addition to competing labor organizers, financial and criminal scandals like the ones involving Local 450 made a dramatic impression on the general public, including Long Island workers. Robert Tallman, a retired Grumman engineer that grew up next to

[21] Of course, this is impossible to verify. In fact, the precise words that the cartoon character is saying to the workers in Long Island are, "You better elect Mr. Fitzgerald or else we will dust you and take your local union – we will decide your affairs and we will tell you who your local officers will be." Obviously, Sarle would not be urging members of Local 450 to vote for Fitzgerald six months after orchestrating his expulsion from the union. In the wake of this expulsion, IUE District 4 ordered Sarle to reinstate Fitzgerald, which Sarle refused to do. This suggests that the cartoon figure may not have been Sarle, but someone sympathetic to Fitzgerald. Of course, the accuracy of the cartoon was not entirely important – the point was to highlight the internal troubles of Local 450, which were certainly real.

the Grumman plants in Bethpage during the 1930s and 1940s, recalled that his father and brother both encountered problems with organized labor while working for a local concern. When asked what kind of trouble, he replied, "Racketeering … and payola. You know, ante up. Then you can work. Otherwise you can't work. I mean, that's not right."[22] In the context of the late 1950s, scandals such as the multiple indictments of Local 450's leaders fit into a larger, national spectacle. Senator John L. McClellan began investigating the Teamsters and other unions in 1957, leading to the sensational hearings that contributed to the notoriety of labor leaders such as Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa.[23] Against the national backdrop of the McClellan hearings and numerous other scandals, the episodes of Local 450 added to the disparagement of organized labor.

Many workers developed a negative impression of unions during the mid-to-late-1950s. Some worried that unions interfered with corporate paternalism. Since paternalism was considered a good thing, a union's interference with this relationship was problematic. Consequently, unions such as the IAM were partly blamed for poor labor relations. Even though executives such as Mundy Peale committed gaffes that alienated employees, unions still received blame for adding extra layers of bureaucracy and paperwork to the workplace. Even though the IUE was not criticized in the same way as the IAM, it was rocked by a series of scandals that also sullied its image. These scandals fit into a larger, national pattern of investigations into unions, which did little to boost the local's image. In addition, periodic strikes hurt the image of unions.

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[22] RT, 3/10/2003.

[23] For background on the corruption in labor unions during the 1950s, see John Hutchinson, *The Imperfect Union: A History of Corruption in American Trade Unions* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1970). For a more recent examination of the Teamsters in particular, see David Witwer, *Corruption and Reform in the Teamsters Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

Unions, Strikes, and Job Security

Strikes played an important role in the labor relations landscape of Long Island during the 1950s and early 1960s for a number of reasons. In some instances, strikes were part of a larger struggle going on between unions and employers in the US (and, indeed, beyond). The efforts of the IUE at Sperry to incorporate white-collar workers relates to the issue of declining union membership in the US during the 1950s. Scholars offer a variety of explanations for this trend, ranging from demographic changes to globalization to inaction from unions themselves.[24] Another contributing factor cited by some, particularly in the American case, was the relative failure of US-based unions to recruit "new" constituencies such as professional and technical workers. This was particularly challenging for unions as the number of white-collar workers increased dramatically and the number of blue-collar workers decreased significantly starting in the 1950s. A number of factors contributed to the inability of unions to attract engineers, including the attitudes of engineers themselves (as witnessed in this and earlier chapters), but also stemming from union attitudes and organizing principles.[25]

Equally important (and related), unions' use of strikes as a negotiation tactic also had mixed effects on their public relations. IUE Local 450 at Sperry and IAM Local 1980 at Republic orchestrated serious strikes in 1955 and 1956, respectively. Long and violent strikes like these were successful but evoked ambiguous responses from workers

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[24] For a useful overview of this literature, see Dan Clawson and Mary Ann Clawson, "What Has Happened to the US Labor Movement? Union Decline and Renewal," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 95-119.

[25] Scholars have analyzed the lack of connection between unions and engineers/professionals, especially in the American case, for some time. For example, see Geoffrey W. Latta, "Union Organization among Engineers: A Current Assessment," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 35, No. 1 (Oct 1981): 29-42; Peter Meiksins and Chris Smith, "Why American Engineers Aren't Unionized: A Comparative Perspective," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 1 (Feb, 1993):57-97; and Gillian Creese, *Contracting Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Race in a White-Collar Union, 1944-1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

and their communities. Certainly, participation in these strikes won important gains like increased wages and vacation pay for many workers, which simultaneously allowed them to demonstrate the kind of respectable masculinity discussed earlier. But people living on Long Island (including people who worked for all three companies) also worried about the impact of strikes on harmonious labor relations, not to mention their household finances. Nevertheless, while some people criticized unions for their activism, others (including non-union members) recognized the benefits that they gained as a result of union efforts. Critically, and perhaps counter intuitively, employees also worried about the impact of unions on job security. Some workers from Grumman expressed concern that being in a union gave people less job security because it interfered with paternalistic practices by employers that protected them when work was slow. Both unions organized additional strikes over job security that were less successful and drew trenchant debate from some members. The section closes with a fascinating exchange of letters from union members' wives regarding a strike over seniority. This points to one of the key differences between Republic and Sperry versus Grumman. At Republic and Sperry, the unions appropriated the discourse of family, framing themselves as providers for their members and the members' families. By contrast, one reason why unions did not succeed at Grumman was that there the company grasped the discourse of family, and so the paternalistic Grumman provided for its big, happy family of employees.

The IUE and IAM both drew strong criticism for their strikes, which impacted their public standing. Surprisingly, Local 450 was involved in more strikes than Local

1987.[26] Given the poor labor relations track-record of Republic's management, we might expect the IAM to have been more militant and involved in more strikes. However, Local 450 participated in five strikes between 1954 and 1965, while Local 1987 only had two strikes during the same period.[27] Regardless, both unions drew heavy criticism for their actions. Predictably, company officials were quite critical. Perhaps more surprisingly, both unions also drew pointed criticism and even legal action from government officials. Although union members from both locals voted overwhelmingly in favor of these strike actions, other disgruntled workers also expressed disapproval.

The IUE's first walkout was actually a sympathy strike in support of the Engineers Association's strike of 1954. The Engineers Association (EA) was an affiliate of the Engineers and Scientists of America, an independent union, which represented 1,700 of the 2,300 engineers employed at Sperry.[28] The EA demonstrates the determined effort of organized labor to unionize white-collar workers in the post-war period. Frustrated in their efforts to negotiate a contract, the EA went on strike in March of 1954. Members of the IUE refused to cross EA picket lines. The willingness of the IUE to align itself with a white-collar union is significant, indicating the kind of cross-class organizing labor unions attempted to foster during this period. In light of later developments, the IUE's decision may also indicate that its leaders were courting EA members to affiliate with them. In either case, estimates indicated that a mere 500 to 600 of the 18,600 Sperry employees reported for work. As a result, the entire company

[26] This situation is surprising because, as outlined above, labor relations appear to have been worse at Republic. However, the union at Sperry was evidently more militant (or perhaps simply in a stronger position) than the union at Republic, orchestrating more walk outs during the 1950s and 1960s.
[27] As examined in the previous chapter, Local 1980 also had a wildcat strike in 1952, but this was partially connected to an internal power struggle in the local. In addition, the workers voted to authorize a strike in 1958, at which point the company capitulated and granted the desired wage increase before workers actually walked out.
[28] "Strike at Sperry Halts Arms Work," *New York Times* Mar 3, 1954: 21.

ground to a halt. Concerned that an important defense manufacturer was about to be crippled, the federal government quickly intervened with a mediator.[29] Within a week, the EA voted to continue its strike but granted IUE members the right to cross their picket lines.[30] At the end of a twelve day strike, following three days of meetings with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the EA effectively accepted the final offer that Sperry made before the strike started.[31]

The IUE's participation in a sympathy strike drew mixed reactions from workers, including members of the local. Gabriel Parrish, who worked at Sperry from 1948 to 1986, offered the following reflections on how he and other people responded to the strike:

> When the engineers went on strike, naturally, the other locals also went on strike in support of the engineers. However, support for the engineers decreased as time went by, and naturally men were not working. And it appeared that the union officials for the other locals, shall we say, capitulated, and permitted their employees to cross the engineers' picket lines, which was a surprise to many employees at Sperry. So I would say probably 98% of the shop employees returned to work while the engineers were on strike. In my own mind I thought it was wrong, that you should always, say, respect a picket line. So I refused to cross the engineers' picket line.[32]

Parrish's response provides valuable insight into the dynamics at work within the IUE. Despite the fact that the union leaders' decision to cross the EA picket line surprised many employees, Parrish estimated that 98% of the shop workers did just that. Evidently, many rank-and-file members were troubled by the decision of their elected officials to cross another picket line. Gauging how much concern the decision to return

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[29] "Mediation at Sperry," *New York Times* Mar 4, 1954: 9.
[30] "Sperry at Full-Speed," *New York Times* Mar 9, 1954: 6.
[31] Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 31, "IUE Strike, April 1965."
[32] GP, 8/27/2003.

to work might have raised is difficult. Union members might have been surprised and even disappointed by the local's decision to cross EA picket lines, but they still returned to Sperry in substantial numbers. Workers like Parrish, who continued to honor a fellow-union's strike, represented a small minority.

Just months later, between April and May 1955, Local 450 orchestrated the second, and by far most contentious, strike in its history. The central issue was wage increases in a new contract. Dissatisfied with the company's final offer, members voted to strike. Again, the federal government intervened in an effort to prevent the labor action. Secretary of Labor James P. Mitchell sent an eleventh-hour telegram to the union and company. Emphasizing that "defense requirements make it imperative that every effort be made to prevent a work stoppage," Mitchell summoned both parties to meet in Washington for continued negotiations.[33] Unswayed, workers walked off the job on April 19.

The strike quickly escalated, turning violent. On the morning of April 20, strikers reportedly damaged seventy-five cars belonging to non-strikers as the latter attempted to drive past picket lines. Slashing tires and smashing windows, the ensuing melee between picketers and police threatened to overrun the ten-member police force of Lake Success. Reports indicated that a car ran over one police officer's foot, one picketer suffered a broken arm, and two union members were arrested. Worse still, "One elderly foreman died of a heart attack after pushing his way through a brawling crowd."[34] A second day

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[33] Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 31, "IUE Strike, April 1965."
[34] "Injuries, Arrests and Car Damage Mark Sperry Strike," *New York Times* Apr 21, 1955: 1. Interestingly, the EA conducted a sympathy strike in conjunction with the IUE strike. In a bit of selective memory, the *Times* added, "Among [non-strikers who made no effort to enter the plant] were most of the 1,200 members of an independent engineers' association that conducted a twelve-day strike at the Sperry factory last year. Local 450 respected the engineers' picket lines in that tie-up." Perhaps the report should have qualified that Local 450 initially respected the engineers' pickets.

of scuffles, despite a dramatically increased police presence, compelled Sperry to look for additional assistance. These kinds of violent displays, clearly demonstrating a rough version of masculinity, seem to have been uncommon among IUE members. Unable to cope with the threat of violence surrounding the plant, Sperry ceased operations for three days while company lawyers obtained an injunction to limit the number of picketers and hold the local to a "no violence" pledge.[35] Indeed, at one point Sperry's management even called (vainly) for the Marines to protect the facilities.[36] For their part, Local 450 leaders pledged that the violence would stop (and, indeed, it did). The strike continued until May 21, 1955, without further incident. Assessing the impact of this strike on popular opinion is challenging, though it appears that the event may have alienated rank-and-file members from the local because the workers' initial decision to strike went against the recommendation of their leadership.[37] Following the strike, labor relations remained calm for the next few years.

The next labor relations episode at Sperry highlighted the militancy of some unionists. Members of Local 450 launched an abortive strike on June 1, 1961 over new contract negotiations. With talks continuing well past midnight, negotiators for the union and company, once again working under the auspices of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, reached a deal the day after the IUE's strike deadline. Unaware of this development, some IUE pickets appeared at plant entrances anyway, though they left before noon to take part in the union's ratification meeting.[38] The membership quickly

[35] "Sperry to Reopen; Clashes Unlikely," *New York Times* Apr 24, 1955: 1.
[36] "More," *Time* May 2, 1955. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,866265,00.html, accessed on June 12, 2007.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 31, "IUE Strike, April 1965."

and overwhelmingly passed the new contract.[39] Episodes like this allowed the predominantly male members of the IUE to display militancy and reinforce the kind of respectable masculinity discussed earlier, particularly by maintaining a defiant, manly bearing toward management. In addition, episodes like this suggest that the IUE successfully framed masculinity for workers at Sperry as fraternal, rather than the individualistic, independent version that dominated at Grumman.[40] In this sense, participation in strikes also allowed workers at Sperry to demonstrate the kind of masculinity that the union promoted, as opposed to the "rough" masculinity associated with violence. Indeed, perhaps one of the reasons that the IUE worked at Sperry was that union members there could maintain their masculinity while participating in the union.

Next, the IUE got involved in a complicated strike in March 1962 that connected to larger labor concerns and points to one of the union's real perception problems. Once again, this strike involved the Engineers Association (EA). In 1960, members of the EA at Sperry decided to affiliate with the IUE. In turn, the EA became Local 445 of the IUE, representing 3,400 engineering and technical employees at the Lake Success facilities. Evidently, this move left some EA members dissatisfied. Capitalizing on this unrest, Sperry's management encouraged Mervin West, an employee and engineering supervisor, to initiate a decertification movement among the engineers.[41] The resulting National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election late in 1960 did indeed decertify the

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[39] See "Talks on to Avert L.I. Defense Tie-up," *New York Times* Jun 1, 1961: 28; "Accord Reached in Sperry Strike," *New York Times* Jun 2, 1961: 19; "New Pact Ratified by Sperry Workers," *New York Times* Jun 3, 1961: 10. Unfortunately, as with the 1955 strike, little evidence remains to suggest what impact, if any, this strike had on union members and/or other observers. However, given the mixed reception of other strikes examined in this section and elsewhere, we might infer that these strikes also raised concerns among some people about the benefits of unionization.

[40] Chapter 2 traced the struggles the IAM encountered in trying to reframe masculinity as fraternal versus independent at Republic.

[41] "NLRB Upholds Union at Sperry," *New York Times* Mar 16, 1962: 20.

IUE for the engineers at Sperry by a narrow margin. The union immediately cried foul, challenged the election results, and accused the company of unfair labor practices before the NLRB. In turn, Sperry maintained that the IUE no longer represented its workers and refused to negotiate a new contract after the old one expired in March 1962. This legal wrangling and posturing continued until the expiration of the old contract on March 14, when the matter finally came to a head. On March 15, the NLRB ruled that Werst, as a supervisor, did indeed represent management and that the company had thus initiated the election. The board set aside the decertification results from 1960. On the same day, IUE Local 445 walked out, taking the 7,000 members of Local 450 with them. In a press conference, Sperry insisted that the NLRB's ruling did not affirm the right of the IUE to represent engineers.[42] Consequently, the company "wouldn't bargain its engineers' future with a union that had been voted out."[43] As proof that Local 445 was not a representative organization, Sperry asserted that the strike "had been authorized by 394 persons, kept 7,000 production and clerical workers out, yet 80 percent of the engineers – in whose name it was supposedly called – came to work." The strike lasted twelve days, until both sides agreed to a new certification election in May 1962. The new election results were ambiguous – engineers and scientists rejected the IUE, 1,669-1,069. However, technical workers approved the union, 345-198.[44]

Clearly, the complex events of 1962 were part of the larger struggle between labor and corporations in the U.S. to represent engineers. In situations like this, many engineers rejected unions like the IUE for philosophical reasons. Again, recall the

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[42] "Sperry Proposes NLRB Election," *New York Times* Mar 20, 1962: 32.
[43] Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 31, "IUE Strike, April 1965."
[44] See also "Engineer Strike Starts at Sperry," *New York Times* Mar 15, 1962: 22; "Mediators Summon Sperry Disputants," *New York Times* Mar 17, 1962: 21; and "Sperry Strikers Approve Accord," *New York Times* Mar 27, 1962: 38.

lamentations of IAM organizers about the anti-union bias they encountered among many Long Islanders.

However, the negative attitude of engineers toward unions was not universal. Indeed, a number of people countered the criticism of unions as stultifying, restricting, or unnecessary. Mort Hans worked for Sperry Gyroscope from 1959-1962 and 1964-1979. Hans started as an associate engineer and quickly worked his way up the ranks of engineering, eventually migrating into management. However, perhaps surprisingly (given the attitudes of other white collar employees described to this point), Hans was not critical of the engineers' union at Sperry. He noted that Sperry was one of the few companies in the area that had an engineers union and added:

> Although [by the 1960s] I think I was already in management, I sympathized strongly with the union. I felt that the only way the engineers and management, particularly the lower levels of management, were going to get some basic rights was if the union pushed for rights for engineers and they would be forced to give some to the lower levels of management as well. To that extent I think the union did management – middle, lower management – a great deal of good. In general, the unions wound up with better benefits, I think, than many of the people in management. Particularly, for example, in terms of health benefits.[45]

Hans's observation about the positive impact of the EA and IUE on other segments of the workforce at Sperry provides an interesting counterpoint to the concerns expressed by other engineers and managers. Furthermore, Hans's remark indicates that the negative public relations that affected the IUE during this period were not universal.

Nor was Hans the only professional or technical worker to acknowledge that unions were good for engineers and managers, too. John Caruso, a Grumman employee from 1964-1994, implicitly acknowledged the impact unions had on non-union shops like

[45] MH, 7/22/2003.

Grumman, too. When discussing the fact that workers at Republic unionized while Grumman remained non-union, Caruso commented, "We were up to the union requirements. I mean, they got paid so much, so we got paid so much. Why do I need the union for? When the company responded."[46] Later, Caruso expanded on precisely how the company acted by relating a story about Leon "Jake" Swirbul, one of the founders of Grumman and a key management figure. Caruso laughed and said, "Jake Swirbul, you know what he used to do? Republic had a union, they'd fight, they'd fight. They'd finally settle, and here's the rate of pay. He would, the minute that settled and ready to pay, you know what Swirbul would do? He would increase everybody's salary five cents more than this. Five cents more! No union."[47] So, even though Caruso was a staunch critic of unions, he also implicitly acknowledged the same "trickle down" effect at Grumman that Mort Hans identified at Sperry.[48] Alternatively, some economists and labor activists refer to this as the free rider problem.[49]

In addition, Caruso vividly illustrated another problem of perception that troubled some workers when confronted with the question of whether to unionize or not – job

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[46] JC, 3/19/2003.

[47] JC, 3/24/2003. Indeed, other people related similar observations when asked about Grumman versus Sperry and Republic. Gabriel Parrish, a former union member from Sperry, was less certain, but ventured, "I would say probably Grumman gave benefits that equaled union benefits to keep out a union, I guess." GP, 8/27/2003.

[48] The same phenomenon occurred at Republic, too. Following the resolution of strikes in 1956 and 1962 over pay increases and benefits, management at Republic granted similar benefits to salaried employees. See "RAC Salaried Employees Get Wage Increase," *Republic Aviation News* 39, no 3 (June 22, 1956): 1; and "Administrative, Engineers, Others Get New Benefits," *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 13 (September 7, 1962): 3. Both of these announcements were placed directly below news about the new contracts negotiated between the union and management. Given the explicit juxtaposition, one could easily see how observers like Hans made the connection between negotiated concessions and the subsequent windfall that they received.

[49] The problem of free riders has long plagued unions in the U.S. Recall in chapter three, one of the underlying motives for the wildcat strike at Republic in 1952 was resentment from dues-paying members over their treatment at the hands of free riders. The term free riders refers specifically to employees who are represented by a union but do not have to pay dues. In recent decades, right-to-work laws have dramatically impacted union strength. For a sample discussion, see Casey Ichniowski and Jeffrey S. Zax, "Right-to-Work Laws, Free Riders, and Unionization in the Local Public Sector," *Journal of Labor Economics* 9, No. 3 (Jul., 1991): 255-275.

security. Prior to joining Grumman in 1964, Caruso worked for Reeve's Instrument Corporation in Manhattan and Long Island. While discussing unions at Grumman, Caruso referred to his time at Reeve's, which led to the following exchange:

> JC: Reeve's kept the union out. … When the union finally got in – in the past, when the machinists finished work, had no more work, he didn't get laid off, at Reeve's.   They put him doing something else. Counting rivets and putting them in a bag. But they didn't change his salary. He might have been counting rivets and putting them in a bag at the same salary until more machine work came, in which case he went right back into the machine operation. But they wouldn't fire him. When the union got in, he finished work at 3:00, 3:15 him and his toolbox were on the curb, laid off. Union.
> SP: So it sounds like at Reeve's the perception was that actually the union provided less job security...
> JC: And they always kept up, Arma, next door, was union. The salaries kept up with the union salaries.
> SP: Do you think that would have happened if there weren't a union next door?
> JC: Oh possibly, possibly. At least, they might not have kept up item for item.

Caruso's comments here reiterate the previous point about free riders and also add an interesting wrinkle to the discussion of unions and labor relations. Again, Caruso's point seems counterintuitive,. After all, more than one of the strikes examined in this section was about job security and seniority in the face of layoffs. Nevertheless, the perception was significant and makes sense metaphorically – having a union interfered with the ability of employers to protect employees when business was slow. This perception dovetails nicely with the earlier point about corporate paternalism as a positive attribute – Caruso suggested that other, paternalistic employers were able to provide better job security than a unionized one. This also fits with the discourse of family, too. As a symbolic father figure, Grumman was able to provide for family members (employees) better than organized labor.

Other evidence suggests that Grumman engaged in the practice of assigning busy work to people between jobs more than Republic or Sperry, further contributing to the perception problem that the IAM and other unions encountered there. Grumman experienced fewer lay offs during the 1950s and 1960s than Sperry and far fewer than Republic, which underwent a dramatic downturn. In fact, following the big downsizing after World War II, Grumman did not experience a substantial lay off until 1957. Even then, only 500 people were let go. The aforementioned Leon "Jake" Swirbul, president of the company at the time, sought to allay concerns by announcing that Grumman did not foresee "the large-scale lay-offs experienced by many airframe manufacturers throughout the country."[50] The 500 workers represented just 3.7% of the company's 13,600 employees.[51] Grumman's ability to avoid layoffs likely resulted from its brisk business throughout the period. However, even an active concern like Grumman would have experienced lulls in production, necessitating adjustments in the number of workers. The fact that Grumman avoided the kind of sporadic layoffs seen elsewhere (Sperry, for example, landed plenty of business during the same period but still experienced layoffs)

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[50] "Grumman to Lay Off 500," *New York Times* Sep 27, 1957: 3.

[51] Indeed, employment at Grumman was so stable over the course of the 1950s and 1960s (relative to the rest of the defense industry on Long Island and nationally) that employees became almost cavalier about the possibility of layoffs. The next serious downsizing did not occur until 1970, when Grumman let 5,000 people go. Even then, employees openly joked about the bad news. One quipped, "You know they even are hiring. That's right. I heard that they were going to cut back 50 guys in my department. But we only got three, so I figure they'll have to hire 47 more." Another worker sought to reassure himself and others, "Look, if you've got a clear conscience you have nothing to worry about – they're just going to let the goof-offs go." Michael T. Kaufman, "Grumman Workers Accepting Layoff's without Worry," *New York Times* Mar 8, 1970: 54. Although the prospect of identifying 5,000 goof-offs might seem daunting, other former Grummanites expressed a similar attitude. While discussing promotions, one former employee said that there was no seniority system at Grumman, per se. However, people who had good service with the company got preferential treatment (went to first for promotions, etc.). But the Personnel department kept files and "God only knows what got into those. If you had a couple of problems you didn't have a snowball's chance, but if you kept your nose clean you were in good shape." Anonymous interview, Grumman History Center, Bethpage, NY, 3/17/2003.

indicates that management may have used different in-house assignments like the one described by Caruso to avoid letting people go.

In contrast, workers at Sperry and Republic found themselves worrying about lay offs frequently throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Sperry let people go in 1958, 1959, 1965 (triggering a strike examined below), and 1968. Republic experienced a string of lay offs related to losses in production throughout this period. The company let people go in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1957, 1962 (a massive layoff of 13,000 people, or 83% of the workforce), and again in 1963. By the time Fairchild Hiller bought Republic in 1965, the company employed less than 5,000 people.[52]

Management at both Republic and Sperry attempted to deflect the image problem that these layoffs created for them in two ways. First, they tried to deflect employee anxiety by suggesting that the companies faced economic uncertainty. In other words, layoffs were the result of larger, economic factors such as increased competition. Second, management tried to co-opt worker anxiety by subtly linking this economic insecurity to unions. As early as 1952, Republic responded to the wildcat strike discussed in chapter three by, in effect, blaming the victims. The company faulted the union for alienating the company's biggest customer, the United States Air Force. In an editorial in the *Republic Aviation News* entitled, "How are WE Doing?" editor Louis W. Davis observed that Republic's people should be proud of their record, but warned of a "dark, menacing page in the ledger, too."[53] What was the sinister element? "Strikes are cutting defense production. The recent TWO-DAY stoppage here cost the Air Force more Thunderjets than are lost in TWO MONTHS in Korea." To make matters worse,

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[52] Robert A. Wright, "Fairchild Hiller to Buy Republic," *New York Times* Aug 11, 1965: 1.
[53] "How are WE Doing?" *Republic Aviation News* 31, no 7 (June 27, 1952): 2.

Congress was in the process of slashing defense appropriations. Obviously, news like this did not bode well for Republic. The editor intoned, "At best, the situation must be summed up this way: Keep turning out Thunderjets as fast as possible."

Sperry's management similarly used the company newspaper as an outlet to try subtly connecting the economic insecurity of the company and, by extension, workers to the IUE. In 1958 the company landed a big government project. Despite this, a front-page editorial queried, "In view of the large contracts recently received, why has it been necessary to have spasmodic layoffs of personnel?"[54] The answer was that development contracts such as this one take time to reach the production phase, meaning fewer production workers were required in the short-term. But, judging from the amount of space devoted to the first reason, the second reason for layoffs actually seemed more important. The message addressed to everyone was that production costs were too high: "We are *not* meeting competitors' prices on a number of our own production items." In order to keep production costs down, the editorial admonished employees to cut waste and increase efficiency. The specific mandates included: 1. Stop waste, 2. Be on the job mentally and physically, 3. Be an enthusiastic worker, 4. Recognize the importance of *your part* in keeping production costs down. Most of the people involved with production were in the IUE, and so the implicit audience here consisted of union members. To be sure, other readers would have been cognizant of the intended audience, too. The implication was clear – IUE members wasted resources and time needlessly.

A subsequent report in the *Sperry News* made the connection between the IUE and costs even more explicit. By October 1958 the company was back in full production,

[54] "Competition and Unemployment," *Sperry News* 15, no 7 (May 19, 1958): 1.

having even exhausted some of the union recall lists for previously laid off workers.[55] The article went on to say that layoffs are often the result of exorbitant expenses. "Sperry costs are still too high. This means just one thing – A MORE EFFICIENT DAY'S WORK – by every Sperry employee from top management on down." Again, despite the inclusion of top management in this formulation, the fact that the recall lists related to production workers in the IUE who had been laid off made the intended audience clear. The admonition concluded by making the connection to economic security explicit, "If this [more efficiency] can be attained, the result will mean more new business for Sperry and greater job security for each of us." Unfortunately, assessing the response of workers to the messages from Sperry's and Republic's management regarding unions and job security is difficult.

However, other evidence suggests that during the 1950s and 1960s some workers were certainly unhappy about the use of strikes and consequently had a negative perception of unions, not least of all because of the impact on their economic security. The IAM organized a strike during 1956, which alienated some members even further from the already embattled union. Likewise, the IUE called another strike in 1965 that had a negative impact on the opinion of some members.

The IAM strike of 1956 was long, initially violent, and largely successful from the union's point of view. The walk out was called on February 19 when negotiations over a new contract broke down. An estimated 700 IAM members were picketing when the strike turned violent on the morning of Monday, February 21 as people attempted to cross the picket line. Twenty-two picketers were arrested, including local president

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[55] "Recalls Exhaust Some Layoff Lists" *Sperry News* 15, no 14 (Oct 6, 1958): 1.

Justin Ostro, who was brought up on assault charges.[56] Skirmishes at the gates continued for days. The company and local police appealed to state authorities and the courts for assistance in managing the strike (both in terms of controlling picketers and compelling the union back to the negotiating table).[57] After a total of 114 days, the strike was finally resolved, with the union making substantial ground on most of its central concerns.[58]

However, the length of the strike left some IAM members dissatisfied with the union. One of the central reasons for this related to their own sense of economic insecurity. As Mundy I. Peale pointedly told striking workers at the end of the strike's second week, "Those who have not returned to work are without a pay check this week."[59] The company's management was able to capitalize on the economic hardship that some union members faced during the walkout. According to management, by the end of March more than 2,000 union members were reporting to work.[60] Indeed, Republic received a number of letters from union members disgruntled over the economic impact of the strike, which it published anonymously in the pages of the *Republic Aviation News*. One letter writer observed, "I like my job and I like working for Republic. It has given me the opportunity to support my family during these years."[61]

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[56] "58 Pickets Seized In Strike Violence At Republic Plant," *New York Times* Feb 21, 1956: 1.
[57] "L.I. Police Appeal to State in Strike," *New York Times* Feb 23, 1956: 35.
[58] "Union will Vote in Republic Tieup," *New York Times* Jun 8, 1956: 15 In particular, the contract called for a 17.5 cent per hour increase staggered over the length of the contract. The IAM had initially asked for 19.5 cents and Republic had offered 5 cents. Another central issue was requiring the company to give notice or compensation to workers being laid off (previously, most workers had received only two hours notice and no compensation). The union considered this essential, given that (according to its estimates) 9,000 union members had been laid off in the eighteen months leading up to the strike. The new contract called for two days notice or two days pay. Finally, the new agreement also included a method for recalling workers that would not favor people who had refused to strike.
[59] "To Each Republic Employee," *Republic Aviation News* 38, no. 8 (Mar 2, 1956): 1.
[60] "Back-to-Work Movement Grows," *Republic Aviation News* 38, no. 10 (Mar 30, 1956): 1.
[61] "Letters RAC Has Received on the Strike," *Republic Aviation News* 38, no. 10 (Mar 30, 1956): 3. The source of these letters, combined with the fact that they are unsigned, might raise questions about their authenticity. Verifying the genuineness of these letters many years after their publication is difficult. The letters were all reproduced in a one-page spread of the company newspaper. There are six letters in total;

Another letter explicitly linked a critique of the union to patterns of consumer consumption outside the workplace, adding, “It is my opinion that they don’t realize that working for your company means they are earning a good paycheck which is enabling them to support their families and pay off their homes and cars.” Making the critique of the IAM explicit, this writer concluded, “They should decide who is giving them a chance to earn their bread and butter Republic Aviation or the Union.” The views of these various critics of the IAM also connect with the earlier point about paternalism as a positive employer attribute – the union was being unreasonable and preventing Republic from providing for its employees.[62]

The IUE went on strike against Sperry again in 1965 for very different reasons from the IAM, though some members responded with similar concerns about economic insecurity. In April 1965, the company announced another one of its sporadic layoffs. A total of 118 people were dismissed. However, the union disputed the list of names that management drew up, arguing that two of the workers being laid off had seniority over two men being retained. The company argued that the two employees being laid off were in maintenance, whereas the two men being retained were pipefitters. Since these were two different job categories, and the maintenance workers did not possess the requisite skills for pipefitting, the question of seniority was moot. When Sperry’s management refused to deal with the union’s grievance during a two hour arbitration meeting, the local

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three are typed, three are handwritten. The handwriting is different in each letter, and the writing style of the letters is dissimilar, too.

[62] Indeed, Republic’s management played this up during a later strike. The IAM struck again in 1962, after efforts to negotiate the next contract also broke down. Management launched a vigorous public relations campaign, emphasizing the benefits of employment. In particular, they focused on the high wages that Racers earned. See “RAC production employee pay at all-time high,” *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 6 (Feb 2, 1962): 1. In addition to publications like the employee newspaper, supervisors received slide charts that compared Republic’s wages and benefits with eleven other aerospace companies. Republic led in most categories. See “Compare wages, benefits of RAC and major firms,” *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 7 (Mar 2, 1962): 3.

organized a walkout.[63] The strike lasted forty days and once again featured violence and arrests. Recalcitrance on both sides made this a noteworthy strike, which did little to help the IUE local with its perception problems.

Notably, some union members criticized local leaders for their stubbornness and the resulting economic hardship. Indications of this criticism remain from media reports of the time. The strike received a fair amount of attention in local media markets, thanks in part to the efforts of Sperry's public relations department. A broadcast on local AM radio station WHN featured a letter from Susan Schmerzel, whose husband worked at Sperry. Schmerzel began by blaming both sides for the crisis, "Thousands of families are confronted with hardships because of a lack of responsibility leadership on both sides."[64] However, union leadership received special mention. "Communication between union members and the union seems to be at a standstill. It's the belief that the union is working the men out of their jobs." Rumors were circulating that as a result of the strike Sperry Gyroscope was going to have to turn some of its contracts over to other corporate divisions, or close its headquarters in Lake Success altogether and relocate to Connecticut (in search of cheaper, non-union labor – something other Long Island manufacturers had already done), or that the company was using the strike as an excuse to move some jobs away from the plant. Schmerzel acknowledged that these were only rumors. However, "They are established because the men do not have the communication they need with the union and the company." Clearly, the strike was a source of deep anxiety regarding

[63] "3,600 at Sperry Strike to Protest the Dismissal of 2," *New York Times* Apr 15, 1965: 21.
[64] Transcript of radio broadcast for "Dick Defreitas – Issue" from May 14, 1965, prepared by Radio TV Reports, Inc., for Sperry Gyroscope Company, Hagley Museum and Library, Accession 1915, Box 31, "IUE Strike, April 1965." De Freitas was a popular personality on WHN throughout the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.

economic hardship and job security, which impacted the way some members and their families perceived the union.

Local papers also covered the strike, providing more balanced coverage of both critics and defenders of the IUE. The *Long Island Press* printed a letter to the editor from H.B., a "Sperry wife."[65] Worried about her husband's lack of work, H.B. lamented, "Three more weeks of this intolerable situation and we'll receive 'state dole.' How many families can hold out delayed mortgage payments, utilities bills unpaid, credit union loans only to $100?" Evidently, this letter was one of a number of such complaints received by the *Press*.

In the same issue, the editors printed two responses from other readers to a previously printed letter. Both letters directly countered the claim that the IUE was responsible for undermining the economic security and consuming habits of Sperry workers and their families. The first letter defended the union by pointing out that, in fact, the company had been subcontracting work for some time as a way to avoid paying high union wages to senior people. Entitled "Views of Another 'Sperry Wife'" and signed "Mrs. John Kurt,"[66] the union advocate objected that a prior "Sperry Wife" wrote that "Sperry 'gave' her husband a fair living wage?" Mrs. Kurt retorted, "Sperry Co. 'gave' her husband nothing – the union has fought for every wage, benefit, and safety condition her husband has." Directly addressing the core issue of the strike, seniority, and connecting the strike's underlying grievance quite nicely to Susan Schmerzel's concern about economic insecurity, Kurt insisted:

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[65] "This 'Sperry Wife' Critical of Local," *Long Island Press* May 17, 1965: 3.
[66] "Views of Another 'Sperry Wife'," *Long Island Press* May 17, 1965: 3.

> Do you know the facts – how much sub-contracting Sperry is doing? Do you know how many men have walked out of Sperry with their last pay check after 20 and 25 years, because of this sub-contracting? Does she realize her husband could be next? No one has a future at Sperry – and this does not mean only union men … The lay-offs have been going on for over five years now – slowly creeping up on everyone, and I'm sure her husband has been enjoying his seniority rights without complaining. How would she feel if he was laid-off out of seniority?

Kurt's grim prediction that no one had a future at Sperry was hyperbole, but the observation that workers had made substantial gains on the IUE's watch was true.

Mrs. L. Jacobs, another IUE defender (and, curiously, yet another wife of a striking Sperry worker) was even more passionate in her defense of the IUE in particular, and the labor movement more generally. In response to an anonymous letter from a wife expressing allegiance to the company, Jacobs qualified, "There is no doubt one owes loyalty, in part, to the source of one's income, but by the same token, they must realize that our standard of living is what it is today only because of the unrelenting efforts of unions through the years to better it."[67] She continued, noting that the standard of living her family enjoyed did not come "entirely from the magnanimous company, but mainly through the untiring efforts of good union people." Indeed, Jacobs was clearly worried about the deteriorating public relations that the IUE and other unions on Long Island suffered from. She elaborated:

> In closing, this letter is also a partial answer to the seemingly bad press that unions are receiving on Long Island. The onus for labor troubles should not always be placed on unions. Management must be made to share the responsibility of maintaining harmony; not always to be pictured as the 'knight in shining armor" whose virtue is being destroyed by "evil unionism."

[67] "Labor Lifts Up Living Standard," *Long Island Press* May 17, 1965: 3.

Jacobs eloquently recognized and attempted to address one of the problems that plagued unions such as the IUE and IAM on Long Island during this period. Obviously, workers at Sperry and Republic joined unions because of poor labor relations and/or concerns over job security, seniority, etc. However, once these unions were in place, they also became focal points. People outside the companies began blaming the unions for the poor labor relations (e.g., Catherine O'Regan). News of the strike was unwelcome in other quarters, and was greeted as proof of the undesirability of unions. Concerned by this blurring of public image, proponents like Jacobs attempted to balance the image of the IUE by pointing out the benefits its members had gained.

The collection of letters from the wives of employees points once again to the interesting and significant role that gender played in the lives of the people connected to these companies. The women who wrote letters publicly supporting their striking husbands were certainly vocal, but their focus on their husbands as breadwinners also fits with the patriarchal elements of respectable masculinity discussed above. In some sense, these women were embracing a specific gender identity that emphasized women in the home, supporting the men fighting to provide for them.

Moreover, the staunch support that these wives provided to their striking husbands indicates that they understood participation in unions as a pro-family act. The union was there to safeguard the family, and therefore the whole family (and not just the worker) supported it. In other words, men participated as good husband/fathers and women supported as good wives/mothers. The next chapter will explore the emergence of masculine and feminine roles as a mutually necessary bridge between work and home in Sperry's culture during the late 1950s and 1960s.

Strikes made a dramatic impact on union and non-union workers on Long Island during the 1950s and 1960s. The IAM and IUE both organized long strikes that ultimately earned substantial gains for their members. Savvy non-union shops like Grumman extended these benefits to their own employees, making it more difficult for unions to gain traction. In addition, other factors hurt the perception of unions among Long Islanders during this period. People such as Catherine O'Regan and John Caruso worried that a union would interfere with the ability of a large employer like Grumman to provide for employees. In this sense, paternalism was perceived as a positive attribute, the mark of a responsible employer that took its moral obligations seriously. Also, other union members were frustrated and even angered by the economic hardships imposed by strikes, even as others defended unions and organized labor more generally. Interestingly, many of the people involved in this last debate were not members of unions, but rather their wives.

Perceived Impact of Unions on White- and Blue-Collar Masculinity, 1950s-1960s

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, union membership has decreased from an all-time high of 35.7% of the workforce in 1953 to 12.0% today. What are the reasons for this dramatic drop? Scholars point to a host of causes, including McCarthyism and the rebirth of welfare capitalism following World War II. Other scholars focus on globalization and deindustrialization. Evidence like the "Olga Pushkin" artwork of Fred Dresch and oral histories from former employees suggests that workers at companies like

Grumman rejected unions for other reasons as well. Cultural factors also played a role in this process. In particular, workers at Grumman feared that joining a union would reduce their autonomy within the workplace, while simultaneously weakening their job security. In other words, joining a union was actually perceived as emasculating.

Some scholars have explained workers' rejection of unions by examining employers' efforts to persuade their employees to reject unions by instilling a sense of benevolent paternalism within the workforce. Companies did a very good job of reviving welfare capitalism after World War II, reframing power relations as mutual or shared. In other words, this new benevolent paternalism was consensual – it involved an accepting decision from employees to be part of a harmonious community within the workplace.[68] Indeed, as discussed previously, some oral histories reflected this development. For example, Catherine O'Regan approvingly noted, "Grumman was a nice company to work for. They were very paternalistic. And if you had a gripe they usually did what they could to change it."[69]

Examining the cases of Grumman, Sperry, and Republic adds another dimension to this analysis. Despite Sperry's and Republic's management's efforts to create paternalistic relationships, workers still unionized. Meanwhile, employees at Grumman rejected repeated organizing drives.[70] This was a perplexing development considering

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[68] This insight is the main contribution of scholars such as Sanford Jacoby. See Sanford M. Jacoby, *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism since the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[69] KO, 7/10/03, and discussed briefly in chapter one. The next section will take up the question of workers' thoughts about paternalism more fully.

[70] As discussed in previous chapters, the mechanics at both Republic and Sperry were unionized, as well as the Sperry engineers. Mechanics at Republic belonged to Lodge 1987 of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), a union that had contentious relations both internally and with management throughout the period under consideration. Shop workers at Sperry belonged to Local 450 of the Union of Electrical Workers (UE), which later became the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE). This union also had various difficulties over the years, though nothing on the scale of the IAM. In contrast, the workers at Grumman rejected unionization altogether, despite repeated efforts by several unions, including Local 30 of the IOE.

that all three companies were located in the same area, worked with similar technologies, and had workforces that looked very similar. As previously discussed, each company had a large, well-developed personnel department that went to great lengths to create good labor relations. Given these circumstances, why would the workers at Sperry and Republic ultimately choose to join the UE/IUE and IAM, while employees at Grumman turned away the IOE (International Operating Engineers) and others?

The way that workers understood and constructed masculinity in these workplaces provides additional insight into their ambivalent reception of unions. As outlined in chapter one, all three companies were located on Long Island, and provide excellent case studies of the factors that led to a changing culture of masculinity and declining union density beginning in the 1950s. Long Island is commonly associated with the phenomenon of suburbanization, perhaps most famously captured in the example of Levittown. But Long Island was also a major center for defense manufacturing and engineering long before the rise of Levittown. Indeed, the production taking place in Nassau and Suffolk counties were substantial fuels for the suburban explosion of the post-war years. These companies continued as the largest employers on Long Island after WW II. Their growth and the development of the surrounding suburbs was part of the migration of the white working and middle classes out of city centers like New York, which is critical to understanding the kind of gendered working class culture that developed in these companies.

Gender adds an important component to help explain the hesitant response of some workers to organized labor. As an entire generation of historians and other scholars have observed, gender as a category of analysis does not simply focus on the lives of

women, but rather examines the way that femininity and masculinity are mutually constitutive in shaping identity and reinforcing disparate power relations. During the 1950s, the traditional, white, working class masculinity that infused the corporate culture of these defense manufacturers contributed to a sense of community based on a collective manly identity. The particular masculinity that emerged at Grumman was a bit rougher, whereas men at Sperry and Republic embraced a more respectable version of manliness.

The previous chapter examined the way that workers at Republic feared that the IAM was disrupting traditional gender roles and also what masculinities union organizing affirmed. Alongside these developments, many workers at other companies such as Grumman also perceived that unions undermined a traditional sense of manhood. This helps to explain why most of these predominantly male workers accepted welfare capitalism, even at a time when union joining was peaking nationally. The skilled, male employees that dominated these workplaces believed that joining a union such as the IOE would actually reduce their autonomy. The division that a union would introduce into the workplace threatened traditional notions of male prerogative and independence. Workers were already anxious about the continued compartmentalization and de-skilling of the workforce. A number of scholars such as Michael Kimmel and Stephen Meyer have observed that masculinity was in a state of crisis during the post-war period.[71] If the presence of a union further undermined an already embattled male identity, then joining a union would be emasculating and, therefore, most undesirable. This phenomenon also impacted the IUE at Sperry, a development examined in more detail earlier in this chapter.

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[71] See Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Steve Meyer, "Rough Manhood: The Aggressive and Confrontational Shop Culture of U.S. Auto Workers during World War II," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 1 (2002): 125-147.

Data from oral histories, as well as company and union archives, helps explain why workers at Grumman remained nonunionized. One very fecund oral history came from Robert Tallman, the retired engineer quoted earlier. After serving in the Navy, Tallman returned to Long Island in 1953 and began working for Grumman. He started out on the shop floor and quickly worked his way into engineering. When I asked him why the workers at Grumman did not unionize, he responded, "You get into a situation as far as job limitations. In Grumman, the sweeper could go out and run electrical wires. They didn't care. If you're unionized, uhn-uhn. There was a limitation on what you could do."[72] I replied, "So it sounds like you actually perceived that being in a union would give you less control over work." Tallman answered, "No, we didn't see any real benefit to us for the unions; it would be counterproductive really. It would limit what we could do." He went on to illustrate his point with a concrete example, "I was working with some guys over in the oxygen [lab], actually they were working for me, and I could go over there and pick up a wrench and start working with them. Now in a union I could not do that." Why would Tallman worry about being able to work alongside technical personnel? Part of the reason for this might have been that Tallman started working for Grumman on the shop floor; he would presumably be more familiar with production methods and more inclined to assist people working for him.

Tallman's response about workforce division and unionization points to the role that masculinity played in the corporate culture at Grumman. Over the course of his career, he moved in and out of the lower ranks of management, certainly raising a question as to whether he would be open to the idea of joining a union in the first place. However, his specific reasons for eschewing the union are revealing. Tallman focused on

[72] RT, 3/10/2003.

the limitations that a union would impose on his autonomy and mobility. This loss of control and male prerogative was an important point. Tallman was concerned that a union's presence would result in his strict confinement within the ranks of a fixed hierarchy, which might have affected his identity in a number of ways. The limitation on interactions with blue-collar workers was potentially emasculating because he would have to go through a chain of command in order to get his instructions followed. This is the type of analysis that labor historians like David Montgomery traditionally offer – the debate about unions at companies like Grumman was essentially over control of work processes.[73] Certainly, Tallman and others were concerned about a union impacting their control in the workplace (recall William Wait's earlier observation that some of his colleagues wanted to be able to simply dictate to blue-collar workers, "This is the way it's going to be and you better do it.")

However, in the case of Tallman, another consideration related to masculinity was also at work. The previous chapter discussed the shift that took place among white-collar employees at Grumman to a more demonstrative form of masculinity during the 1950s. This change may have stemmed, in part, from the fact that many of the new people entering the expanding ranks of engineers came from particular working class, ethnic, and racial backgrounds.[74] For people like Tallman, continuing to work in the shop from time to time may have provided an important way to counteract the potentially

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[73] For example, see the enormously influential David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Montgomery places control of the workplace at the center of an insightful analysis of labor relations. So, for example, management sought to exert control over the workplace by deskilling workers. As we have seen already, and will see again here, workers often perceived questions of control in gendered terms, and consequently contested workplace developments through these same categories that possessed separate histories and dynamics.

[74] For a penetrating analysis, see Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2005). Katznelson argues that the GI Bill, though ostensibly color-blind, left local governments in charge of benefits, resulting in the discriminatory distribution of benefits.

emasculating behavioral norms that went along with white-collar work. A union could potentially disrupt this – he would no longer be able to demonstrate his virility on the shop floor. In this sense, Tallman would be prevented from fulfilling his social and cultural aspirations, which consisted of more than being a middle-class, white-collar worker. An integral part of this identity also consisted of being *a man* (and in particular, a white man). Tallman's concern with autonomy and limitations reflected anxiety about how the presence of a union might have hampered his ability to continue performing traditional, blue-collar male tasks. Tallman's concern about unionization was more than just fidelity to a paternalistic employer; it speaks to his ambivalence about the changing roles of men within the workplace and his ability to function within them, ideas that may have been shaped by his time in the hypermasculine world of the Navy.

During this interview, Tallman also provided a fascinating anecdote that further illuminates the role gender played in the debate about unions. He related the following joke:

> There was a union electrician who went out to Las Vegas. And he decided he wanted to go to a bordello. So he went into this one house of ill repute and he asked the madam, "How much does the house get and how much does the woman get?" And she says "The house gets 80% and the woman gets 20%." And he was fuming at that, he went stomping off to another one, same thing. Went to three or four, same thing. Finally one, he asked the madam, "What's the breakdown?" She said, "Well, the ladies get 80%, we get 20%." "Okay" he says, "well, I would like that lady over there." You know, real attractive young lady. The madam says, "I'm sure you would, but you have to go over to Rita here who is 85 years old, she has seniority."

The intriguing aspect of this joke is the message it conveys about the hazards of unions. In this comic world, unions clearly stifle meritocracy and individual competition. Most importantly, this joke connects with other examples from Grumman's corporate culture.

Finally, the codes contained within the Fred Dresch cartoon discussed at the start of the chapter can be fully unlocked.

The jokes about the bordello and the "Red Star Matrimonial Bureau" raise a serious critique of the social impact of unions through a seemingly humorous medium. They both make subtle reference to communism. Also fascinating is the common and degrading depiction of union members as old, unattractive women who use their seniority to "steal" men away from younger, more attractive women. Beyond conveying various messages about women, sardonic pieces such as these explicitly condemned unions for their deleterious impact on male independence and individual competition. The message could not have been simpler or bolder in its play upon masculine anxieties – join a union and you will end up with an old, ugly woman.

The fear about a union affecting mating rituals also connected to the other fear about stifling the workplace as a meritocracy. The underlying ideology of merit exerted a powerful influence within Grumman's corporate culture. Grummanites believed (and they certainly were not alone in this regard) that an individual could improve himself through dedication and hard work. Employees openly expressed this notion within the pages of the company newspaper. A fascinating excerpt from the *Plane News* illustrates the way that famous figures reinforced the ideology of merit and contributed to the implicit condemnation of unions. Published in February 1952, an editorial references a past US president as a model American. Titled simply "A. Lincoln," the write-up observes, "Lincoln the Man is the prototype American and the typical president in a democracy. His life and character and career have a deep significance for all of us who

love these United States and the ideals of individual freedom and responsibility."[75] Abraham Lincoln is held up as an example of the manly ideal, personifying character, patriotism, and personal self-determination. The idea of self-determination was an important component in the ideology of merit that infused the workplace at Grumman. The editor lauded Lincoln, "He rose from obscurity by an odd combination of circumstances and was elected president by a minority of the electoral vote."[76]

Lincoln was the embodiment of the culture of merit that Grummanites (and others) believed in passionately, personifying the kind of Horatio Alger, rags-to-riches story that was (and is) such a compelling part of American culture. Another article in the *Plane News* made Lincoln an Alger-type figure even more explicitly, "Lincoln more than any other man has come to represent the ideals of and the dreams of America. He grew up in an illiterate and poverty-stricken home and won his way to the highest honor and responsibility that the Republic can give any man. He typifies freedom of opportunity and the rights of every man in a democratic way of life."[77] The jokes about the bordello and the "Red Star Matrimonial Bureau" turned on the notion that communism threatened this culture of merit within the workplace.

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[75] "A. Lincoln," *Grumman Plane News* 11, no 4 (Feb 14, 1952): 2.

[76] In addition to embodying the Horatio Alger style story of personal improvement, the editorial also suggests a divine influence in the life of Lincoln: "It is altogether fitting that the greatest president in our history was the uncommon representative of the common people, of whom Lincoln said that the Lord must love them because he made so many of them.… As we read the story of Lincoln's life and works, it seems almost as if he was predestined by some all-seeing Intelligence for the role that he played in social and political history."

[77] "Birthday of Freedom," *Grumman Plane News* 4, no 7 (Feb 15, 1945): 6. For reconsiderations of the life and work of Horatio Alger, see Carol Nackenoff, *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Jeffrey Louis Decker, *Made in America: Self-Styled Success from Horatio Alger to Oprah Winfrey* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). For a reexamination of the development of Lincoln's legacy (he did not become the subject of gaudy tomes and memorials until the 20th century), see Andrew Ferguson, *Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007).

Grummanites expressed concern about communism beyond the workplace, too. An article from 1953 intoned gravely, "They Have to be Told."[78] The "They" in question were high school seniors. In an editorial adapted from an article by George S. Benson, the *Plane News* editorial staff (comprised primarily of members of the Personnel department) expressed alarm about how little high school seniors knew. Worse still, 55% of seniors would even agree with the communist statement "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."[79] The editors worried most keenly over this last point. The idea of providing for people based on need rather than ability represented a dangerous attack on the culture of merit. The answer to this challenge was clear, "The results of this high school sampling indicate, among other things, that the facts about our American system, the secret of American prosperity, must be spelled out over and over again in the simplest terms for all our citizenry." Anything that threatened meritocracy and, therefore, masculine self-determination, was a threat that young people had to be warned about. Even though some unions were struggling to dissociate themselves from communism during this very period, their menace to autonomy was still a cause for concern among Grumman employees.[80]

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[78] "They Have to be Told," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 3 (Jan 29, 1953): 2.

[79] George S. Benson was a fascinating figure, and his presence as a reference in Grumman's paper is telling. Benson was a firm believer in laissez-faire economics (something absorbed while earning an M.A. from the University of Chicago) and appealed to a broad audience. He testified before Congress, hosted radio shows, and produced a syndicated newspaper column. L. Edward Hicks argues that Benson was an important transitional figure, connecting the old religious right of the 1920s and 1930s with the new religious right of the last thirty years. See L. Edward Hicks, *"Sometimes in the Wrong, but Never in Doubt": George S. Benson and the Education of the New Religious Right* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

[80] Indeed, one of the unions examined here was involved in the attempt to root communism out of the labor movement. As discussed earlier, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) created the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE) in 1949 to replace the UE, which the CIO accused of communist connections. The transition at Sperry, as elsewhere, was a contentious one, receiving quite a bit of coverage in the local press.

These anxieties about the negative impact of unions were not limited to white-collar employees at Grumman. Unionized, blue-collar workers at Republic expressed open frustration with their union as well. In 1954, Jeremie Gosselin, a member of Local 1980, sent a letter to George Meany, the president of the AFL. Gosselin asserted that union supervisors had created "a veritable little reign of terror" at one of the Republic plants.[81] The supervisors were apparently targeting workers (for reasons that are not entirely clear) and subjecting them to "a system of *continual surveillance*, the purpose of which is, in part, to make the worker nervous, and thus causing him to make mistakes, and also to try to break his spirit." In this case, a union member actually needed to summon the IAM to intervene and prevent other union members from abusing their authority, thereby preserving his job and his manhood.

Significantly, the examples of Tallman, Dresch, and Gosselin illustrate the complex way that different masculine sensibilities interacted in these companies. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Stephen Meyer, Michael Kimmel, and R. W. Connell, previous chapters have observed that manhood meant different things to different people in these different workplace contexts. Meyer and others distinguish between "rough" and "respectable" manhood as they relate to labor relations on the shop floor. In this framework, "respectable" manhood is rooted in the craft traditions of skilled workers. David Montgomery defines respectable manhood as maintaining a "manly bearing" toward management, which included displaying "dignity, respectability,

[81] Letter from Jeremie Gosselin to Mr. Meany dated January 24, 1954, in IAM Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society, Roll 340 (Local 1987).

defiant egalitarianism, and patriarchal male supremacy."[82] Rough masculinity, on the other hand, followed from the traditions of unskilled laborers. In the words of Joshua Freeman, rough meant "aggressive, crude masculinity" or "swaggering masculinity."[83] Peter Way emphasizes that these unskilled workers were drinkers, brawlers, and risk-takers.[84]

The interplay between these different types of masculinity affected the way some employees thought about labor unions. Robert Tallman illustrates this concept very well. Tallman came from a working class background (his father drilled wells, and had worked for Grumman during World War II). In addition, after serving in the hypermasculine world of the Navy and starting his employment on the shop floor, Tallman was rooted in the rougher version of masculinity. His Las Vegas bordello joke fit with Freeman's depiction of rough, working class culture. Moreover, Tallman's concern with the union impact on job limitations reflected anxiety about the impact a union might have on his gender identity. Specifically, being locked into a management position threatened his "rough manhood", and he therefore opposed the union because it would prevent him from being able to counter his effeminate respectability with blue-collar roughness. In other words, he worried about not being able to associate with coworkers who were below him in the pecking order, performing their type of work. This complex intermingling of elements from rough and respectable manhood indicates the way that working class and

[82] David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century," in *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 13.
[83] Joshua B. Freeman, "Hard Hats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-war Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26 (1983), 725, 732; quoted in Meyer, "Work, Play, and Power", 15.
[84] Peter Way, *Common Labor: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

middle class masculinities were rearticulated in corporate cultures during the post war period.

People employed at Grumman worried about the effect that a unions' introduction might produce. White-collar employees in particular worried about a union such as the IOE impinging upon the eclectic, though more demonstrative, form of masculinity that had taken hold at Grumman during the 1950s. By limiting their ability to interact freely with other segments of the workforce (for example, directing mechanics working on the shop floor), any union represented a potentially emasculating threat for two reasons. First, engineers and low-level managers would have less control over their own working lives. Second, engineers who worried about maintaining a rougher version of masculinity would be unable to mingle with blue-collar workers as a means to achieve this. All of these factors help to explain the problems of perception that hampered labor unions like the IAM and IUE beginning in the 1950s. If these aerospace companies are at all representative, then developments there suggest that the surge in unionizing during the 1940s and 1950s could only go so far.

Chapter 5: "I Want Diplomatic Immunity": The End of the Big, Happy Family, 1960s-1970s

Introduction

John Caruso was an engineer with the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation from 1964-1994. By the late 1960s, Caruso was project engineer in charge of a large job. While directing this group, he developed the practice of showing rough design drawings to shop floor personnel in order to get feedback for improvements. However, this violated company policy, which prohibited such exchanges between engineering and shop. Caruso calculated that the benefits outweighed the risks, since the practice would result in improved efficiency and performance. In fact, his method worked so well that a senior executive eventually took notice. Caruso kept careful track of the suggestions in a private file, which he resisted sharing with anyone. Eventually, however, he related:

> Well, I was forced to share it. They backed me into a corner. Vice president wanted to know one day, he got me into his office, and he says, "Your project has been doing very well. Exceptionally well. Why? How?" And I was, I never should have did it but I did, I says, "Well I sort of blew up forty-two red lights in the company and went around things." "You did what?! I want to see that file." So I says, "No." And he looked me up and down, he says, "You're talking to me, the vice president, and you show me that..." I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, I want diplomatic immunity." That's exactly what I told him. He laughed. He says, "Get that damned file up here."[1]

Caruso's story illustrates the way that some white-collar workers believed they had to fight (or, in this case, circumvent) increasing corporate bureaucracy in order to get their

[1] JC, 3/19/2003.

jobs done. They were not merely fighting for efficiency at work – their social and cultural identities were at stake as well. Insisting on interaction with the shop floor was a method for white, male, white-collar workers to protect their identities as the workplace around them changed.

This insistence on surreptitious interaction with the shop was one way that workers like Caruso responded to a broader crisis in white, male, middle class identity. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, social changes initiated by the actions of the federal government and the companies under study disrupted the cultural affirmation of separate gender spheres and the privileging of white personnel examined in earlier chapters. Like World War II, the introduction of women and other minorities into these spaces changed workplace cultures again, threatening white, male, middle class identity. In addition, employers also increasingly transformed the workplace with bureaucratic measures. At the same time, and perhaps even to combat the perception that they were undermining gender roles, employers like Sperry used a variety of methods to attempt reinforcing gender norms for men and women. People like Caruso struggled to maintain their autonomy in this changing environment. In response, white, male workers began to formulate their identities differently. Defining themselves as principled men, these individuals used a variety of methods to demonstrate a maverick form of masculinity. Indeed, as demonstrated by the anecdote above, concern with deteriorating autonomy also affected homosocial and cross-class relations as well.

The chapter opens with one of the more striking examples of the culturally prescribed gender order that dominated prior to the 1970s: the Miss Sperry contest. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Sperry sponsored a series of pageants that

rewarded an idealized version of femininity, which personified physical beauty, sociable personality, and contented domesticity. This romanticized femininity fit well with the kind of paternalistic, familial relations that these large employers fostered. However, during the 1960s, the system of paternalism and prescribed gender roles began to break up, partly because of changes initiated by employers themselves, and partly because of larger socio-cultural currents from workers. Even in a non-union shop like Grumman, employees such as John Caruso struggled against bureaucratic rules that threatened their autonomy and effectiveness. In the end, companies like Grumman and Republic subjected workers at all levels to explicit forms of manipulation and control. At the same time, government initiatives during the 1960s, which encouraged affirmative action by employers to end discrimination, changed the social makeup of the workforce. Oral histories often conflated these separate developments. Companies like Grumman and Sperry began hiring women, blacks, Jews and others in greater numbers and including in more skilled occupations such as engineering. Even though these groups still represented small numbers, the impact on workplace culture was dramatic. The predominantly white, male workers at these companies were clearly effected. In addition, the oral histories of women that worked for these companies offer powerful testimony to the way that the social changes of the 1960s (as illustrated in these workplaces) altered their own sense of what it meant to be a woman living and working in the United States.

Prizing Femininity: Miss Sperry and Other Regal Rewards

The collection of letters from the wives of employees in the previous chapter underscores the role that gender played in the lives of the people working for Sperry, Republic, and Grumman, as well as their families. In public, the wives of these workers vociferously defended them, adopting a traditional feminine supporting role. The corporations also promoted and rewarded a particular kind of femininity, which fit with the support these women gave their husbands. The companies identified the preferred versions of femininity and masculinity through depictions of women and men. Female employees often posed for photographs in swimsuits or other poolside attire, which company publications then published. These pictures rewarded women for embodying qualities of femininity that were shared with, or at least valued by, the community. In this context, community is understood to refer to a unified body of people with a set of shared interests. The most incisive example of this prized femininity was the Miss Sperry contest, which Sperry Gyroscope featured as an annual event from 1957 into the early 1960s. By awarding prizes to female employees, the community of Sperry has left behind an anthropological record of the values that it wanted women to manifest. Above all, Sperry rewarded women who embodied physical beauty, sociable personality, and happy domesticity.

The timing of these contests represents a shift from one cultural project to another. The Miss Sperry pageants became popular in the late 1950s, slightly after the majority of the material presented earlier on editorial cartoons, which dealt with (among other things) returning Rosie the Riveter to a separate, female sphere. However, Sperry had various other contests, beauty and otherwise, several years before this, during and

immediately after WW II. Even though some of the earlier contests featured bathing suit photographs, they did not match the size, popularity, or emphasis on physical beauty of the Miss Sperry contest. Indeed, one earlier competition went so far as to urge, "This is NOT a beauty contest."[2] However, once the first post-war transition of re-segregating women in the home and office was complete, a second set of contests emerged that focused on beauty by openly displaying photographs of female employees in bathing suits and other attire.[3] These later contests celebrated, reinforced, and rewarded women for embodying these new (neotraditional) cultural values of beauty, personality, and domesticity.

From humble beginnings, the Miss Sperry contest grew in popularity quite rapidly. Starting in 1957, Sperry's recreation department hosted an annual Sperry Variety Show, organized by the Sperry Choralaires. As part of the first variety show, there was a small Miss Sperry contest.[4] *The Sperry News* reported in 1958 that the next show was going to take place in June of that year, and that this production would be bigger and better than the last. As a part of it, "The Sperry Beauty Contest will again be included in the show under our supervision, but this time it will be worked into the framework of the show."[5] The presence of the company's management is evident

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[2] "Miss Victory Contest Begins Today," *The Sperry News* 1, no 13 (October 16, 1942), 1.
[3] This was visible as a broader trend within U.S. popular culture, too. Maureen Honey notes a similar transition in advertising following the war. She begins her analysis of advertising images during WW II by lamenting what came after, as Rosie the Riveter was replaced by images of Lucille Ball and Marilyn Monroe. These later stars "embodied a childlike sexuality and comic naiveté that were far removed from the images of competence in wage work so recently highlighted by women's entry into war production." See Marueen Honey, "Remembering Rosie: Advertising Images of Women in World War II", in Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons, ed., *The Home-Front War: World War II and American Society* (Westport: Greenwood, 1995): 83-106.
[4] Unfortunately, the beginnings of the contest are a bit fuzzy due to the unavailability of certain volumes of the *Sperry News*.
[5] Gus Albert, "In Albert's Alley," *The Sperry News* 15, no 2 (February 3, 1958), 6.

("under our supervision"), which indicates that this was something officially countenanced as part of the corporate culture.

The beauty contests quickly became very popular at Sperry. The second contest in 1958 featured twenty-three contestants from Sperry's Nassau County facilities alone and drew more than 5,500 votes (again, from employees based in Nassau County).[6] In other words, roughly one-third of the employees cast a ballot for the competition. All told, "More than 7,000 votes were cast in this second annual election for the forty contestants who entered from Sperry's LI installations."[7]

The presence of a Miss Sperry contest in the late 1950s should not come as a surprise. Beauty pageants were at the height of their popularity during this period.[8] Each year, Americans were presented with (and voted for) hundreds of different "queens" of one type or another, from Miss America and Mrs. America all the way to Queen of the Speedboats and Miss Potato Chip.[9] Beauty pageants have been the subject of some very insightful scholarly attention in recent years.[10] As Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje have observed, pageants "showcase values, concepts, and behavior that exist at the center of a

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[6] "Record Vote Decides Finalists in 2nd 'Miss Sperry' Contest" Sperry News 14, no 7 (May 19, 1958): 5.
[7] The figure of 7,000 included 1,500 employees from locations outside of Nassau County.
[8] For an excellent overview of the most popular beauty pageant, Miss America, see Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin, "The Miss America Pageant: Pluralism, Femininity, and Cinderella All in One," *Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 1 (summer 2000): 105-126. Other works on beauty pageant culture will be addressed below.
[9] Gay Talese, "Survey and Study of Our 'Queens'," *New York Times Magazine* October 27, 1957: 28, 56, 58.
[10] Noteworthy studies include Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty: A Social History Through Two Centuries of the American Idea, Ideal, and Image of the Beautiful Woman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983); and Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin, ed., *"There She is, Miss America": the Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Of these works, Banet-Weiser's is particularly engaging. She closes her book with a challenge to feminist theory and the way feminists critique beauty pageants. Contemporary pageants have appropriated feminist rhetoric, and candidates now present themselves as strong, independent women who are competing for the opportunities provided by pageants. Banet-Weiser spins this into a larger reconsideration of the very concept of "agency" as individual achievement.

group's sense of itself and exhibit values of morality, gender, and place."[11] In the context of a larger culture of beauty pageants, the founders of Sperry's beauty contest were eager to express their own shared values. In fact, Gus Albert (Sperry's recreation supervisor) made the connection between Sperry's contest and other competitions quite explicit in a number of ways. When announcing the contest for Miss Sperry in 1958, Albert enthused, "Who knows, she may win the Miss America title?"[12] Clearly, the contest organizers were influenced by and thinking about the larger beauty pageant culture of the time. This pageant culture emphasized broad themes like patriotism, respectability, femininity, beauty, and civility. The case of Sperry included a sense of local identity and pride as well.

Another link between Miss Sperry and the broader beauty culture of the late 1950s was a self-conscious attempt to mimic the "Miss Rheingold" contests. These were annual beauty contests hosted by the Rheingold brewing company. Sponsored annually, by the late 1950s these contests drew over 3,000 candidates per year. When this marketing campaign originated in 1939 the "Rheingold Girl" was actually selected without public input. The competition was eventually changed to a search for "Miss Rheingold," with a public election to decide the winner. "Ballot boxes were put in taverns and grocery stores, and, in a tradition as old as Boss Tweed, people could vote early and often and stuff the ballot box as full as a Christmas turkey."[13] The Miss Rheingold competition was wildly popular, garnering the second-most votes of any

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[11] Colleen Ballerino Cohen and Richard Wilk, with Beverly Stoeltje, "Introduction", 3, in Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, ed., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[12] Gus Albert, "In Albert's Alley," *The Sperry News* 15, no 1 (January 13, 1958), 10.
[13] Robert Alden, "Advertising: Beer Queen Needs a Bit of Hop," *New York Times* (April 10, 1960): 10.

election in the U.S., behind only the Presidential elections.[14] Given this, it should not be surprising that the announcement for the opening of the "Miss Sperry of 1959" contest noted a new format for the contest, one that would "take on the 'Miss Rheingold' approach, with portraits set against familiar L. I. landmarks, emphasizing also the many historical and recreational advantages of the area."[15]

However, the exact meaning of the Miss Rheingold "approach" is unclear. This may have been an attempt to allay concerns that the contest was not respectable. In photo opportunities for major publications, the six Miss Rheingold finalists did not appear in bathing suits, but rather routinely appeared in matching, stylish dresses. A profile from the *Saturday Evening Post* of the six finalists for 1963 indicated, "They were all smiling hard, and were dressed identically in girlish, unrevealing clothes provided by the brewery. As always there was nothing chic, glamorous or sexy about them."[16] This move away from chic and sexy was a deliberate calculation on the part of the competition's organizer (and president of the company), Philip Liebmann. By emphasizing the civility of the contestants, he hoped to highlight the legitimacy of the

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[14] As the *New Yorker* observed, "In 1956, the vote totalled just over twenty-three million; this year it promises to be even bigger." See "Strenuous," *New Yorker* 33 (September 21, 1957): 35-36. Significantly, the article continued the comparison between the Rheingold competition and the Presidential contest, with an emphasis on civility. "Like Presidential candidates, they're expected to admire each other, and, unlike, Presidential candidates, it seems they usually do. What makes them still more unlike Presidential candidates is the fact that they eat together, sleep together, go to the movies together in their spare time, wear identical dresses, share a chaperone, and enjoy sitting around late at night talking shop and eating brownies." This was one of the values that the Sperry community prized as well. One report about a Miss Sperry reported, "But she remembers most of all the girls in the contest." Pat Algozine went on to state, "They were all just wonderful ... one of them kissed me in all the excitement ... we all tried to help and encourage each other." See "Miss Sperry Contest Opens," *The Sperry News* 15, no. 3 (February 24, 1958): 8.

[15] "Sperry Beauty Contest On – New Rules Set," *The Sperry News* 15, no. 15 (October 27, 1958): 12.

[16] David L. Goodrich, "Will the Real Miss Rheingold Stand Out?" *Saturday Evening Post* 236, no. 40 (November 16, 1963): 48, 51.

competition.[17] The Sperry community prized the value of civility as well. One report about a Miss Sperry recorded, "But she remembers most of all the girls in the contest." Pat Algozine went on to state, "They were all just wonderful ... one of them kissed me in all the excitement ... we all tried to help and encourage each other."[18]

The move away from bathing suits was a trend in beauty pageants outside such workplace contests more generally. In writing about beauty contests (and Miss Rheingold in particular), *Newsweek* observed in 1961 that "Under the influence of industry – and much to the chagrin of many male oglers – most major beauty contests have long since abandoned their early roles as mere displayers of female flesh."[19] Indeed, the holder of the Mrs. America title for 1958 famously responded to a photographer who asked her to lift her skirt, "I don't pose for cheesecake, I bake it!"[20] The emphasis by employers on home-based work for women is telling, strongly placing women's work outside the corporation.

This may be what Sperry organizers had in mind. Like many national competitions, the previous Sperry pageants had looked like swimsuit contests, featuring entrants posing in one-piece and two-piece bathing suits. Beginning in 1959, however, the competitions featured more "respectable" attire. The first contestant for 1959, whose

[17] Liebmann elaborated, "Women realize that Miss Rheingold isn't the sort who'd be a threat to them. People approve of her. We get enthusiastic letters from nuns and priests." Note the contest organizer expressed concern with civility (Miss Rheingold is not a "threat"), in addition to worrying about the possibility of alienating female drinkers by featuring women in provocative clothing and/or poses. This concern with civility was reflected in both national competitions like Miss Rheingold and local affairs such as Miss Sperry. For example, the article from the *New Yorker* cited above compared the Rheingold finalists and Presidential candidates in terms of civility. "Like Presidential candidates, they're expected to admire each other, and, unlike, Presidential candidates, it seems they usually do. What makes them still more unlike Presidential candidates is the fact that they eat together, sleep together, go to the movies together in their spare time, wear identical dresses, share a chaperone, and enjoy sitting around late at night talking shop and eating brownies." See "Strenuous," *New Yorker*, 35-36.
[18] "Miss Sperry Contest Opens," *The Sperry News* 15, no. 3 (February 24, 1958): 8.
[19] "Prettiest Businessmen Ever ... Turn Beauty Into Booty," *Newsweek* 58 (September 18, 1961): 88-89.
[20] Roul Tunley, "What Happened to Mrs. America's Bathing Suit?" *Woman's Home Companion* 84 (January 1957): 10-11.

photograph appeared in *The Sperry News* (figure 5.1), was introduced with the caption, "Fashionable – the new picture style to be used for 'Miss Sperry' entrants".[21] The accompanying photograph is of Joan Gerbino, the runner-up for Miss Sperry 1958, in a dark dress and pearls, posing seated outside a large shopping mall. The caption explained, "Photos, for the first time, will be set against a panorama of historic and recreational L.I. landmarks."[22] While the juxtaposition of this photograph and caption might provide the contemporary reader with a sense of cognitive dissonance (the shopping mall as historic and recreational landmark), it points to the importance that malls filled at the time as suburban areas like Long Island continued to expand dramatically.[23] The mall in question was Roosevelt Field, which was America's biggest mall when it opened in 1956. Despite the fact that Gerbino was a Sperry employee, picturing her in front of Roosevelt Field also frames the mall as a place of women's work.

[21] "Sperry Beauty Contest On," 12.
[22] This could also be what the Rheingold "approach" refers to. Miss Rheingold had typically been photographed in static, seated poses until 1959, when an experiment with different photographic equipment captured dynamic shots of Emily Banks (Miss Rheingold, 1960) dancing and singing on location at the famous La Concha hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The other locations that Emily Banks visited for photo shoots as Miss Rheingold included bowling alleys, the Fulton Fish Market in New York, and the top of a bulldozer in San Fernando. See Alden, "Advertising: Beer Queen Needs a Bit of Hop."
[23] In fact, the shopping mall has received renewed interest from scholars. For example, see Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (Oct. 1996): 1050-1082.

Figure 5.1 “Fashionable”

If, indeed, the Miss Sperry organizers were trying to present a more respectable image, what makes the introduction of the “Rheingold” element all the more strange is that the photograph directly above Joan Gerbino featured the current Miss Sperry in what appears to be a one-piece bathing suit (figure 5.2). The caption introduces the reader to Sandy Kuene, Miss Sperry for 1958, who was “delighted with all-expense, week-end trip to the White Stallion Ranch, given as the top prize in the beauty contest.” Kuene is posing with Joy and George Kastner, the owners of the Ranch, who are both fully clothed.[24]

[24] Subsequent photographs of contestants continued to show this same bipolar quality. For example, in a later issue, three contestants were featured posing in a local park. One was posed in a dress, but the other two were wearing one-piece bathing suits. See “Three Miss Sperry Entries Lend Charm to Early Spring,” *The Sperry News* 16, no. 6 (April 27, 1959): 8.

Figure 5.2 “Prize Holiday”

One of the other things many beauty contests did in order to ensure they remained “respectable” was to incorporate marriage clauses into their rules, which specified the intended marital status of their contestants.[25] This was also a way of asserting an idealized division of marital labor. In contrast, the Miss Sperry contests were open to any female employee, regardless of whether they were married. In fact, when Sperry’s competition was first announced in January 1958, it was presented as a competition for the “Miss or Mrs. Sperry” contest.[26] In the case of other pageants, most notably the Miss America and Mrs. America contests, the marital status of the contestants was vital. Each competition presented and rewarded different conceptions of femininity. Miss America freely emphasized physical beauty, retaining a swimsuit competition throughout the period. The organizers of Mrs. America, on the other hand, looked for a woman who was an outstanding wife, cook, homemaker, and, as *Woman’s Home Companion* put it, a

[25] The creators of the Miss America pageant forgot to include a marriage clause in their original set of rules. This resulted in a series of imbroglios during the 1920s involving a number of contestants who were either married, had children, or were otherwise unfit for the title “Miss America.” See Watson and Martin, “The Miss America Pageant: Pluralism, Femininity, and Cinderella All in One,” 107-108.
[26] Gus Albert, “In Albert’s Alley,” *The Sperry News* 15, no 1 (January 13, 1958): 10.

"general pillar of the community."[27] In other words, the competition looked to reward excellent workers in a particular setting. *Woman's Home Companion* observed that since the inception of the Mrs. America contest, Americans had seen "The evolution of a top national contest, stressing the ideal in woman, from a bathing-beauty show into a serious home economics tournament." This represented a change in the values that the Mrs. America pageant prized in its female contestants. The Mrs. America contest was founded in 1938 by Bert Nevins as a way for the Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey to compete with the Miss America contest in nearby Atlantic City. The founding premise was that married women could be just as attractive and appealing as single ones, and as such Mrs. America looked much like any other beauty pageant from the time. But during World War II, this began to change. The contestants were increasingly not professional models, and domesticity began to feature prominently in the contest. The Mrs. America of 1949, Betty McAllister, was the first one hailed as "the nation's most typical homemaker."[28]

In fact, much like the "Mrs. America" contests, the organizers of the Miss Sperry pageant openly lionized domesticity. The announcement of the official opening of the contest for 1958 also featured a profile of the previous year's winner, Pat Algozine. Algozine had gotten married in the intervening year since winning the competition, and was now Mrs. Bill Brown.[29] The editors continued, "That's reversing the romantic trend somewhat, becoming a 'Miss' in June and a 'Mrs.' on the coldest weekend in January." However, the article tacitly approved Algozine's new status as Mrs. Brown. "The little

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[27] Roul Tunley, "What Happened to Mrs. America's Bathing Suit?" *Woman's Home Companion* 84 (January 1957): 10-11.
[28] Again, it is worth noting that this shift in the Mrs. America pageant coincides with the larger cultural redefinitions of femininity examined in this and earlier chapters.
[29] "Miss Sperry Contest Opens," *The Sperry News* 15, no. 3 (February 24, 1958), 8.

routines of married life are beginning to form after two months."[30] Married life seemed to be agreeing with her. As importantly, in an endorsement of one of the central components of domesticity, "She's a good cook, which leaves her husband still wondering when he's going to get his first burned meal." Algozine's Miss Sperry profile praised her because she embodied the best of both of the major national beauty contests – Miss America and Mrs. America. Single when she won the award, Algozine achieved a veritable coup-de-grace by getting married. With one candidate, the Sperry community found an ideal woman that combined the qualities of both the Miss and Mrs. America contests. Algozine embodied the kind of civility, domesticity, and beauty that this community valued most from women.

An important but unstated factor in these competitions relates to the category of race. One of the core shared values, and certainly a central part of the idealized identity for these community members, was whiteness.[31] Quite simply, most of the models featured in the pages of publications by Sperry, Grumman, and Republic were white. This included all of the models for Miss Sperry. In addition, Grumman and Republic both had very active photography clubs, which sponsored multiple contests every year. The photographers were typically men, and they would often enter pictures of their friends or family members in either bathing suits or formal evening wear (this included fiancés, wives, teenage daughters, and sometimes even the teenage daughters of co-

[30] One can only hope that the "little routines" described here does not refer to scenes like those found in chapter two under the section on "domestic strife and other challenges to masculinity."
[31] The topic of whiteness and identity has been the object of some very interesting studies in recent years. An important introduction to the topic is Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998). For a critical overview of the field of whiteness studies and its historical origins, see Christina Pruett, "The Complexions of 'Race' and the Rise of 'Whiteness' Studies," *Clio* 32, no. 1 (Fall 202): 27-50.

workers).[32] Almost all of these women were white. More than once, the *Republic Aviation News* featured female employees posing at the beach, performing public service announcements about the hazards of over-exposure to the sun and urging Racers to don sunscreen.[33] Again, these employee-models were white. The preponderance of white personnel in the pages of these publications is representative of the workforce, which was also predominantly white during the 1950s.[34] This emphasis on whiteness extended to the surrounding communities as well. Indeed, Long Island was one of the epicenters of segregated housing in the wake of WW II.[35] Racial homogeneity was important for members of the middle-class, white community that increasingly moved to the suburbs of Long Island during the 1950s and 1960s.

However, as the post-war period went on, exceptions to the racial homogeneity of the models and contestants began to appear. The *Republic Aviation News* of July 6, 1962 included a photograph of Lorraine Daniels, a young, black Republic employee. A typist for the company, Daniels had placed among the top twenty in a "Miss Beaux Arts"

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[32] For examples of this, see "Here are Some Entries," *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 19 (September 11, 1953): 10; "Prize Photo," *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 5 (January 5, 1962): 8; and "Another Winner for Harry Odell," *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 10 (July 6, 1962): 8.

[33] For examples of this, see "You Should Listen to Me!" *Republic Aviation News* 27, no 7 (June 2, 1950): 1; and "Watch Out for Ol' Sol," *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 10 (July 6, 1962): 1

[34] Regrettably, none of the companies have demographic information available for this period. National figures for 1962 indicate that of the 22.6 million women in the civilian labor force (34% of all workers), 2.7 million were nonwhite (4% of all workers). All but a small percentage of these women were African-American. The median earnings of nonwhite women workers were about half those of white women workers in 1960. See Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *1962 Handbook on Women Workers: Bulletin No. 285* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1963), 14, 70. Interestingly, images of black workers (male and female) can be found in the pages of the company newspapers, even if they did not participate in the beauty pageants. However, this pattern was already being challenged in some nationally visible quarters, including the Miss Rheingold competition itself. One profile of the Miss Rheingold competition reported that 800 contestants had entered, "including a number of Negro models, three of whom lasted until the final eliminations." Goodrich, "Will the Real Miss Rheingold Stand Out?", 48. Tellingly, there are almost no images of non-white, non-African American employees of any kind in the company newspapers.

[35] The most comprehensive overview of the rise of suburbs in the U.S. (and the role that government agencies such as the Federal Housing Administration played in promoting them) remains Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

contest held by the Urban League of Greater New York. The purpose of this contest was to determine "the most photogenic women in metropolitan New York area."[36] The brief caption goes on to inform the reader that Daniels is married and the mother of two children. As a reward, "Lorraine received a $1,000 full-year charm course and has been asked to model." Again, as with the Mrs. America contest, we see a subtle emphasis on work and labor issues. The editors indicate modeling is as an appropriate arena for women's work. The example of Daniels provides an interesting connection with larger cultural trends that were underway during this period.[37] In particular, this is representative of the beginning acceptance of African-American women as attractive in broader U.S. culture.

As the post-war period developed, the communities under examination here found a number of ways to reward women for embracing traditional identities. Women were acknowledged for embodying (or at least, publicly displaying) femininity, which in this case referred to being domestic and civil. In addition, of course, they were expected to look good doing this, in either a bathing suit or dress. The affirmation of traditional femininity within Sperry's corporate culture during the late 1950s and early 1960s also fits well with the reassertion of traditional versions of masculinity during the same period examined in previous chapters. However, the following section examines the ways that

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[36] "Finalist," *Republic Aviation News* 45, no 10 (July 6, 1962): 7

[37] In her semi-autobiographical *Where the Girls Are*, Susan J. Douglas suggests that Diana Ross played a substantial role "in making African American beauty enviable to white girls." Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994), 96. Also, for a very interesting discussion of race and beauty pageants, see Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, as well as Maxine Leeds Craig, *"Ain't I a Beauty Queen?" Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For a brief but insightful discussion of the relationship between African-American activists and beauty culture more generally, see Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Holt and Company, 1998), especially 256-260. Peiss points out that African Americans provided the most penetrating critique of the American beauty ideal during the 1950s and 1960s.

corporations like Sperry and Grumman began to undermine these gender norms, eventually deconstructing the corporate cultures that had served them so well.

Classified Masculinity and Male Agency at Grumman, early 1960s

During the Vietnam War, John Caruso was working for Grumman. Caruso was an engineer working on radar systems, including a device that could absorb radar waves. This allowed the Navy to safely test an aircraft's radar before it took off without giving away the plane's position to enemy radar detectors. Obviously, this was an extremely desirable piece of equipment. According to Caruso, General Westmoreland heard about this item and insisted on getting it, even though it was still just a prototype. Caruso received a call from Grumman in the middle of the night, telling him to "get that unit working."[38] However, the device was not finished. In fact, Caruso did not even have it – an outside contractor was working on it. He was instructed to go and get it, regardless. When Caruso contacted the outside vendor, they refused to relinquish it. Caruso recounted, "So I made up a story. I says, 'Listen very carefully ... I need that piece of equipment to go out to [Vietnam]. I'm going to send an A-6 over your factory and bomb it if I don't have that thing within a couple of hours,' and I hung up."[39] Within a couple of hours, he had the device and it was on its way to Westmoreland.

[38] JC, 3/19/2003.
[39] John Caruso related this story to me during an oral history. He originally placed this anecdote within the context of the Korean War. It is far more likely that this episode took place during the conflict in Vietnam.

Analyzing the experiences of people like John Caruso helps us to understand the complicated way that gender identity, particularly masculinity, began to change in the corporate culture of large manufacturers like Grumman during the 1960s. The fascinating aspect of this example is the role that the company played. On the one hand, manufacturers like Grumman encouraged male employees to prove their manliness at work. This reinforced a sense of community that helped people (specifically, men) feel empowered in the face of increasingly emasculating changes to labor relations and organization during the post-war period. Ironically, as Caruso and other sources indicate, Grumman was the one instituting these changes, such as intensified bureaucratization and the reintroduction of women into previously male workspaces. Slowly but surely, management was undermining the rougher versions of white- and blue-collar manhood they previously encouraged their employees to cultivate.

However, Grumman's co-opting of masculine identity was not complete and did not happen overnight. Continuing into the early 1960s, Grumman still maintained the workplace as a site of masculine identity formation quite explicitly, through social practices such as banning women from the shop floor. Management also encouraged employees to prove their manliness in other ways, such as urging John Caruso to use any means necessary to get the radar muffling device from a reluctant contractor. When such audacity was rewarded through promotions and pay raises, employees were encouraged to think of themselves as mavericks, men on the cutting-edge of an exciting field. The workers contributed to this corporate culture, too. The former employees that I interviewed, particularly the ones from Grumman, thought of themselves as

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The A-6 was a Vietnam-era plane. More importantly, Caruso did not work at Grumman during the Korean War.

nonconformists. Robert Tallman referred to himself explicitly as a “mustang,” a term he first encountered in the Navy. Like him, many employees at Grumman brought the masculine military culture of the Navy with them to Bethpage. Likewise, John Caruso’s descriptions of clashes with various levels of management paint a clear portrait of a man who thought of himself as a principled rebel. Ironically, the very act of refusing to conform helped a man fit comfortably into Grumman’s postwar culture. This reflects a deep tension within the post-war critique of conformity and corporate America. Tallman’s interpretation of his experience echoes the kind of unease expressed in iconic works such as Wilson Sloan’s *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.[40] Simultaneously, the reaction of white-collar workers like Tallman contradicts William Whyte’s characterization of them as unthinking conformists in *The Organization Man*.[41]

Further evidence of Grumman’s encouraging of masculinities, particularly white-collar masculinity, comes from a fascinating series of personnel ads the company placed during the early- to mid-1960s. The ads were developed by Newmark, Posner & Mitchell, a well-known advertising agency, in an effort to cut down on turnover among engineers. Acting on a request from Grumman management, Newmark, Posner & Mitchell conducted a study to develop new recruitment approaches. The study found that the average engineer stayed on a typical job for two and a half years before moving on to a new employer.[42] This turnover created substantial losses in terms of efficiency and the wasted time involved in training a new engineer.

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[40] Wilson Sloan, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955). This book was critically acclaimed and so popular that it was quickly made into a 1956 film starring Gregory Peck and Jennifer Jones.
[41] William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).
[42] Peter Bart, “Advertising: New Lures for Recruitment?” *New York Times* December 27, 1961: 34.

Indeed, personnel managers at Grumman (and elsewhere) had struggled to control the size of their workforce for years. As described in previous chapters, the number of workers employed by all three companies under study expanded and contracted dramatically throughout the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. As Ben Ezra, an engineer at Republic during the 1960s, explained, "Layoffs was always, in the aircraft industry, layoffs was something that was heard about, rumored about, in the back of your mind. The aircraft industry was very cyclical. You got a contract and you needed lots and lots of people. And then as you executed the contract and things started to finish up, you had this excess amount, you had all these people and not much work to do. So the layoffs began right away."[43] For some manufacturers, these cyclical employment patterns created sharp anxiety for their employees.

However, unlike Ezra, some Grummanites were quite cavalier in the face of layoffs. Faced with the news in 1970 that the company would lay off 5,000 workers, loyal employees faced the uncertainty of their situation with impressive stoicism. Despite the prospect of one in every six people working for Grumman being laid off, one man in the maintenance department volunteered, "Look, if you've got a clear conscience you have nothing to worry about – they're just going to let the goof-offs go."[44] Another mused, "If you're in the aircraft industry and if you can't live with this kind of insecurity, you really shouldn't be working here." These quotes offer testament to the sense of security that Grumman workers experienced. The idea that 5,000 employees (or more than one in five workers) were "goof-offs" who could easily be removed might seem naïve, but it speaks to how strong Grumman's labor relations were. There are several

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[43] BE, 4/29/03.
[44] Michael T. Kaufman, "Grumman Workers Accepting Layoffs Without Worry," *New York Times* (March 8, 1970): 54.

possible explanations for why they would have faced the future with such brave faces. The first is that Grumman had not experienced mass layoffs since the 1950s. The second is the sense of paternalism that the company tried to instill in its workforce – these people believed that so long as they had been good to the company and had a clear conscience, Grumman would provide for them. This helps to explain why some Long Islanders regarded Grumman so well, and why working there was desirable for many people.

Despite this popularity, as Ezra alluded to, the job of hiring sufficient numbers of employees could prove a serious problem for personnel departments during peak periods. Indeed, cartoonists at the time also light-heartedly alluded to this issue. The *Grumman Plane News* featured at least one such joke, a comic depicting two executives sitting in an office. The first man says to the other, "What a dream I had last night! I met this beautiful blonde who invited me to her apartment … her brother turned out to be an engineer and came to work for us!"[45] This joke turns on a number of gendered conventions, the most prominent being that this romantic encounter with a beautiful woman was considered successful (from the executive's point of view) because it culminated in a job offer to another man. When hiring an engineer was preferable to sex with a "beautiful blonde", retention must have indeed been a problem. Also, as seen with the work of Fred Dresch earlier, this may have been a subtle form of teasing upper level bureaucrats, which would also be consistent with the accounts of white-collar workers like Caruso and Tallman. The anxiety that some employers experienced when they got a big contract and suddenly needed swarms of new engineers contributed to an intriguing set of elaborate, gendered advertisements.

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[45] *Grumman Plane News* 17, no 7 (April 4, 1958): 4. This was another comic copyrighted by cartoon-of-the-month; the artist was Jeff Keate. A sign behind the two executives reads "Titanic Mfg. Co."

Rather than relying on somnolent recruiting, Grumman retained the services of Newmark, Posner & Mitchell to stem turnover problems. Pearse A. Mitchell, executive vice president of the advertising agency, concluded that most ads failed to give an accurate representation of the employer, which was one of the reasons why so many engineers left after a relatively short time.[46] Mitchell believed that turnover could be limited if companies like Grumman "attempted to show engineers their essential personality" and working philosophy. In order to sum up the "essential personality" of Grumman, Mitchell took a group of his own executives out to Bethpage to soak up some local atmosphere.

The resulting ads emphasized the leisure-time amenities that employment at Grumman afforded engineers. The emphasis on leisure-time activities also contained subtle gender cues that shaped the masculine culture that Grumman engineers defined themselves in relation to. In other words, these ads highlight the way that management attempted to reinforce the masculine culture of the workplace. One such ad featured two men standing on a golf course, looking at what appears to be an E-1 plane in the distance, as they prepared to tee off.[47] The text reads:

> The first tee is hardly the place for a theoretical discussion on the relative merits of automated high resolution radar, but that's how it goes at Grumman. It's difficult to tell an engineer to turn his mind off at 4:30 when as so often happens, he heads for the nearby Bethpage golf course. While there is no supporting statistical data, it has been the Grumman experience that many first rate engineering ideas have been born away from work … even under the unprofessional auspices of the golf course. Total involvement with their work seems to be characteristic of Grumman engineers.[48]

[46] Bart, "Advertising."
[47] The E-1 Tracer was a Grumman radar plane designed to provide airborne early warning.
[48] "Electronics at Grumman," *New York Times* (June 11, 1961): F19.

The emphasis on leisure is fascinating, though the blurring of work and personal boundaries is also striking. As the last line underscores, the company was clearly looking for engineers with "total involvement" in their work.

At times, John Caruso's descriptions of his career at Grumman practically quoted ads such as this. When I asked Caruso if he felt that he had control over his work, he responded, "Oh yes. They wanted something done, I was able to do it, no matter what the obstacles were. I had an obstacle, I bowled over it, one way or another. That's why I thoroughly enjoyed it."[49] Caruso's description of his staunch commitment to getting a job done fits nicely with the "total involvement" described in Grumman's classified ads. Caruso extended this commitment even further, which occasionally led him afoul of other departments within the company. In response to the question, "Sounds like you did a good job of keeping control of your projects," Caruso stated, "Yeah, yeah, and it worked, it worked very well. But like I say, me doing the whole job, contracting, proposing, purchasing, you know doing the ... ahh, rubs feathers within the company. The purchasing department, 'What the hell are you? You're engineering, you're not purchasing!'" In particular, Caruso related a story about one project where he circumvented the purchasing department, thereby ruffling feathers. While working on an assignment, he made arrangements to buy equipment from a different company than the one normally used through purchasing. Caruso elaborated, "This set purchasing off. But I said, 'Can you get these for that price?' And that shut them up." Moreover, Caruso remained unapologetic for actions like this. He summed up, "How can I put it? Yeah, did I make some enemies along the way? Didn't bother me a bit. Company first …" At this point, Caruso made a sound, as if to indicate slitting a throat.

[49] JC, 3/19/2003.

The Grumman ads from the early 1960s also shed light on another classification system that encouraged a particular kind of masculine image. The leisure activities that were emphasized – particularly golf – were part of the masculine domain of activity during this period, within both Grumman and the broader U.S. culture. Women who participated in golf professionally were considered gender-bending oddities that drew fascination and horror for their "mannish" style and abilities.[50]

Catherine O'Regan illustrated the explicitly gendered aspect of golf within Grumman's corporate culture. Women were largely excluded from golf and other leisure activities that Grumman used to recruit engineers. When discussing the various sports clubs that employees participated in, O'Regan observed that for years following World War II, women were not allowed to join softball teams. Eventually, the company solved this problem by creating women's teams, including a golf club. She recounted:

> CO: I remember I joined the golf club.
> SP: Really?
> CO: And graduation was that Bob Benn took us out to Bethpage golf course after work to play our first round of golf. And as soon as we arrived they closed the course.
> SP: Ohh.
> CO: That's what we said. He said, "No, no, no, they're closing it for you." And we started off as foursomes. And, later afterwards we found out all the rules of the golf course. We broke every one of them. You're quiet, and we're shouting back and forth to each other. We knew from nothing. But it was fun.

The reason for closing the golf course is debatable, but suggests some very interesting possibilities. While the act was doubtless intended as a gesture of consideration and respect, it also had the effect of segregating the women during a recreational activity, just as they had been at work. For their initial trip to a golf course, these women were given

[50] For example, see Susan E. Cayleff, *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

plenty of space and leeway. Alternatively, part of the motivation may very well have been to protect experienced, male golfers from the loud, ill-mannered female interlopers. Questioning the ability of women as golfers was nothing new, as one cartoon from the *Plane News* illustrated. Two women were toting their clubs on a golf course. One said to the other, "I'll never forget the day I played an entire hole with just one ball!"[51] This critique of women participants in sports, and golf in particular, was consistent with the undermining of women's competence in the workplace more generally during the 1950s, as examined in chapter two.[52]

In fact, O'Regan's observation about golf as a principally manly activity was hardly new. Other women had previously complained about the explicit link between golf and gender within Grumman's culture, too. In 1951, the *Plane News* asked two men and two women employees, "Would you say that this is a Man's world?"[53] One of the women – Margaret Follet – responded emphatically, "I most certainly would!" She illustrated her point by discussing her favorite sport, golf:

> One of the most glaring examples of the discrimination practiced against us is this week-end golf situation. Some clubs refuse us the privilege of playing at all on Sunday. There are those that let the bars down in the late afternoon (grudgingly, that is) and then there are the clubs that allow you to play, knowing full well that

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[51] *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 16 (July 30, 1953): 6. This cartoon was also copyrighted by Cartoons of the Month.

[52] Indeed, comic references to golf appeared frequently in the pages of the *Grumman Plane News* beginning in the late 1940s, indicating that the sport played an important role within the company's culture. Moreover, many of these references were explicitly gendered. A cartoon by Fred Dresch pictured a woman at home on the phone (presumably talking to her Grummanite husband). A golf bag has been ripped in two, with one half slung on her back as a makeshift baby carrier (complete with an infant occupant). The other half of the bag lies discarded on the floor (along with the clubs). The caption reads, "Guess what problems your little wifey fixed today?" *Grumman Plane News* 8, no 11 (May 26, 1949): 2. The joke works on several levels. The reference to "problems" indicates the woman's frustration with caring for the baby by herself, which also hints at the second problem – golf is a time-consuming activity, and this hypothetical woman was expressing frustration at being left home alone, caring for the family.

[53] "You Can Quote Me," *Grumman Plane News* 10, no 14 (July 5, 1951): 2.

> the golfers playing that day will discourage you from DARING to try again. Just count female noses on the golf course on Sundays, and you'll see what I mean.[54]

Significantly, Follet's complaint referred to discrimination on local golf courses that Grumman did not own or operate. However, Grumman did not own a golf course of its own, and so most Grummanites used local courses. In this regard, the particularly gendered nature of golf in Grumman's corporate culture fit well with local (and, indeed, national) gender and sports norms.[55] This quote also sheds further light on O'Regan's earlier description of having the golf course reserved exclusively for the women golfers.

Even if the company did not own local golf courses and was therefore not responsible for these practices, Grumman's personnel department and publications certainly treated golf as a male purview. About the same time that Margaret Follet was complaining about discrimination versus women on local golf courses, the company published a series of articles with technical points on golf – how to hold a club, improve one's swing, etc. Indeed, one such article even featured, "A Short Lesson in Golf Etiquette," which provided a list of things to avoid such as talking when someone is playing a shot or walking through a trap even if it is a short cut.[56]

The gendering of golf in Grumman's culture becomes most evident from the cartoon that accompanies this lesson in golf etiquette. Created by Bernie Brewster, a

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[54] Follett was identified as a member of the Tool Engineering Department who had been with Grumman for three years. She lived in Hicksville with her husband, Beryl, and their dog Spot. "Her favorite sport is golf."

[55] This attitude was not new, either, and popped up in other examples from Grumman's newspaper. One such offering was a cartoon by Fred Dresch in which a golfer, dressed rather plainly in fishing hat and displaying a paunch, is hitting a golf ball. A woman is seated in a lounge chair next to him (on the golf course) and the ball is bouncing its way into her mouth. The golfer quips, "With enough practice someday I may get a hole-in-one." The joke likely alludes to the kind of domestic tension that may have arisen from husbands participating in a time-consuming leisure activity such as golf. *Grumman Plane News* 12, no 4 (February 12, 1953): 2.

[56] Bob Benn, "A Short Lesson in Golf Etiquette," *Grumman Plane News* 9, no 10 (May 11, 1950): 5.

Grumman employee, the illustration offers insight into the connections between gender, recreation, and work at Grumman. In the single panel (Figure 5.3) two Grummanites, a man and a woman, stand before a sign that reads "Personnel Dept." Both are dressed in office attire, identifying them as white-collar workers. The man holds a golf club in his hand and appears to be doing a wide-eyed double-take at the woman standing next to him. The curvaceous woman leans back on a desk and says, "I would love to go, Bob, but I don't know a thing about golf. Why I wouldn't even know how to hold a caddy." Once again, a fictional female employee is presented as being incompetent and even a bit naïve. Doubtless, the unstated punch line to this joke would involve Bob volunteering to play caddy, further demonstrating the role that innuendo played in the corporate culture. This helps to explain the inequitable treatment women received on the golf course – they required their own, segregated tee times because they were incompetent, uncouth, and sexually distracting.

Figure 5.3 "Why I wouldn't even know how to hold a caddy."

In contrast, Republic's recreation department was more inclusive when it came to women and golf, which seems consistent with the less hyper masculine corporate culture

there. Leagues were still gender-specific, but the women's golf league was formed during the 1950s and received visible support for some time.[57] Company publications frequently made announcements concerning the Women's Golf Association, which was established in 1954 and continued for several years.[58] Though gender-specific, the organization was open to any female member of the Republic family: "Formed strictly for the enjoyment of members – Republic employees and wives of employees, beginners and advanced golfers, alike – the organization is fashioned similar to that of a country club with rules and regulations governing." The reference to rules was telling. Clearly, the sort of irreverent behavior Catherine O'Regan described would not be tolerated. To drive the point home, "girls play[ed] in proper flight according to average and with proper handicap." Interestingly, like O'Regan and her compatriots, these golfers also played at Bethpage State Park, though their games were more frequent. They met weekly at 5:30 on Tuesday evenings. Unfortunately, the announcements do not specify if the course was closed to other, male players.[59] Either way, Republic did not use golf and

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[57] Indeed, even before the women's golf league was formed, the company offered golf lessons for interested women. Judging from Republic's own press coverage, these lessons were well attended. See "Golf Classes Attract Many," *Republic Aviation News* 25, no 7 (May 20, 1949): 4, which features a picture of a woman swinging a golf club. See also *Republic Aviation News* 26, no 4 (October 21, 1949): 1, which features a front-page story on Republic women and golf.

[58] See "Women's Golf Association Holds First Match; Officers Chosen," *Republic Aviation News* 35, no 4 (June 11, 1954): 8. Tillie Ambrose was elected vice president of the organization. Interestingly, Ambrose was also one of the Associate Editors for the paper. This may explain why the *Republic Aviation News* gave regular, favorable coverage to the women's golf league (or, alternatively, she may have become involved in the paper as a means of promoting the league).

[59] And even with the increased inclusion of women into the world of golf at Republic, visual representations of the players still made the distinction between men and women golfers quite clear. One representative instance comes from the company newspaper in 1956. Photographs accompany two stories about golfers at Republic. The first article reported that the varsity linksmen were off to a good start. The accompanying picture shows eight men bent over their golf clubs. In contrast, the next article on women's golf activities carries a picture of four women posed together, all holding one club (these are the officers of the women's golf league). The more momentous male golfers were engaged in strenuous competition, and each owned their own equipment, demonstrating their seriousness and expertise. In contrast, the women shared a club and posed happily for a photograph. See "Varsity Linksmen Off to Good Start," and "Direct Women's Golf Activities," *Republic Aviation News* 39, no 3 (June 22, 1956): 8.

similar leisure activities in its recruiting ads. Significantly, Gruman's advertisements only featured male golfers.

Examples such as these advertisements and recreation clubs demonstrate the way that Grumman managers incorporated a gendered component into recruiting and retention campaigns through the first half of the 1960s. In particular, they encouraged engineers to identify with a specific kind of white-collar masculinity, emphasizing total commitment to success at work. This dedication to the job even extended into recreational activities such as golf, which were structured to reinforce male privilege and bolster manly self-image. The next section examines how this corporate culture that reinforced masculinity began to break down.

The Beginning of the End of the Big, Happy Family

Over time, Grumman's management introduced changes that undermined the masculine culture of audacious independence. Over the course of the 1960s, white and blue-collar employees faced a growing number of rules governing their working lives. Examining oral histories and company publications reveals that, in particular, the corporate culture of Grumman changed substantially in response. Each of the companies under consideration became increasingly bureaucratic and hierarchical, consistent with broader national and international developments in business organization during this period. However, in the case of Grumman, the impact on the corporate culture was more profound. A workplace

that had aggressively reinforced class-based masculinities in the past began to undermine these very categories, leading to a dramatic decline in morale.

The contrasting descriptions of Grumman in the oral histories of John Caruso and Robert Tallman illustrate the corporate culture's change over time. John Caruso started at Grumman in 1964, and described a very different workplace than the one Robert Tallman depicted in the previous chapter. Recall Tallman's characterization of the workplace as a harmonious world where men were free to interact, regardless of occupation. When I asked Caruso, "How would you describe your relationship with the company?" he responded, "I think it was pretty good. I rattled them a lot." When I asked him to explain, he continued, "Well, if I had to complete a project and I ran into a red light, for whatever reason, it was my tendency to go around it to complete my project, or blow it up, as the saying might go." Caruso described quite a few "red lights" during his oral history, indicating that he encountered quite a few policies that potentially interfered with his work.

In particular, Caruso broke or otherwise circumvented rules that restricted his ability to interact with shop floor personnel. Caruso adopted the practice of taking rough design drawings from the engineering department and walking them over to the machine shop. There, he would show the drawings to the machinists and solicit feedback for improvements on the design. He then returned these suggestions to the draftsmen that were working for him. The result was that "By the time this drawing got to [the machine shop], it was in pretty good shape, meaning not requiring many modifications. And that worked like hell. But you weren't supposed to do this. Corporate ruling said not to do this." When I asked him why, Caruso retorted, "You just, you can't hand a drawing. The

drawing has to be approved before it goes over to them. The drawing wasn't approved and signed off. But I ignored that, saying, 'Hey, I'm getting benefits out of this.'"

In fact, one of the benefits that Caruso identified was that the machinists appreciated the interaction, too. He observed, "They were grateful as hell that they were working with an engineer who would tell them what's coming down the pike. That was the first thing that opened up doors for me there." Caruso's observation indicates that some shop floor workers also found the restriction of interactions between white and blue-collar workers frustrating.

However, the benefits came at a price. Caruso found himself in trouble with high-level management more than once for his actions. He attributed this, in part, to his own attitude, though he certainly was not troubled by the memory of encounters with Vice-Presidents or other corporate officers such as the one that opened this chapter (indeed, they became something of a badge of honor). When discussing his satisfaction with the company (and it is important to note that he expressed great affection for Grumman), Caruso explained:

> Well, there was always a lot of political, you know, but that's normal. I really can't say "Oh, yeah, I really didn't like this" or ... maybe that's because I didn't really care about the ramifications. I just went ahead and bulldozed in. So maybe with that attitude, yeah, I got into hot water. Yeah, I did. Several times. I'd think nothing of sitting down and writing a letter on Grumman letterhead and signing it and sending it out to the Navy. That's a no-no of enormous consequence. It really is. I'm not corporate. But I did that once.

Actions like this resulted in additional reprimands from corporate executives. This particular incident occurred during the 1960s, when Caruso was working on a phased-array radar project. He wanted to use a prototype that was being designed at the Johns

Hopkins University. Untroubled, Caruso sent a dispatch on Grumman letterhead (without prior approval) stating he would be responsible for the prototype in the event it was damaged. When senior managers found out what he had done, a corporate officer summoned Caruso for a meeting. The executive was giving Caruso a hard time, until a company lawyer interceded, pointing out that "the letter was fine from a legal point of view" and that the company was insured for five million dollars anyway (the equipment only cost one million). We can only speculate what the outcome of this meeting might have been without the presence of that particular lawyer.

Caruso's commentary provides a sharp contrast with Tallman's depiction of the Grumman work environment, highlighting a dramatic change over time. Where the latter describes a happy, harmonious workplace in which shop and engineering interacted freely, Caruso's account presents a setting worthy of Kafka. The disparity in these two accounts reflects changes in the corporate culture at Grumman during the 1960s. Tallman worked for Grumman from 1953-1992. Caruso started with Grumman in 1964 and stayed until 1994.

Other workers confirmed the change that occurred at Grumman. Donald Riehl, for example, explained that Grumman's work culture changed beginning in the late 1960s. He attributed this to the growth of the company, explaining, "As it got larger, it became more structured."[60]

Another reason Grummanites experienced a more relaxed corporate culture during the 1940s and 1950s may have also originated with the Navy. One of the most elegant summaries of this practice and its underlying causes also came from Donald Riehl. At the time of our interview, Riehl was 70 years old. He worked for both

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[60] DR, 7/9/2003.

Republic and Grumman (Republic from 1951-1964 with two years out for military service, and Grumman from 1964-1994). He started working for Republic shortly after he graduated high school. Riehl's first job was a blueprint control clerk, which means he was in charge of tracking blueprints as they made their way through the company. By the time he retired from Grumman, Riehl was financial manager for computing systems. During a discussion about interactions between shop-floor and engineering personnel, Riehl provided an expansive, and extremely valuable, comparative analysis of the differences between Grumman and Republic.

> DR: I think Republic was more structured. And that had a lot to do with the customer at the time. The Navy was very loosey-goosey and they were willing to give the contractor a lot of latitude. They would do a lot of things at Grumman on word of mouth kind of thing. A guy would see a better way to do something and do it and worry about the paperwork later, if ever. All right? At Republic, maybe because it was a union shop, and more likely because it was an Air Force shop, the structure and the paperwork, the procedures were more rigid. Yeah, I think that probably struck people that went from one to the other right away, that Grumman was a lot more informal.
> SP: That was your experience?
> DR: Yeah, yes. Yes.

Riehl's suggestion that the differences in corporate cultures at Republic and Grumman were tied to their respective clients is fascinating, and helps to explain some of their differences. Over time, however, the organization and culture at Grumman also changed, becoming more rigid. By the time he retired in the 1990s, "it was as structured as anybody." These changes began gradually in the late 1960s – a narrative that matches with Tallman's and others. Part of the reason for Grumman's move to a more structured work culture was that the Navy was no longer tolerant of the company by the 1970s. A relationship of strict hierarchy and oversight replaced the "loosey-goosey" culture.

Indeed, William Wait suggested this precise periodization as well, with specific reference to Republic. His perception was that the Air Force became entirely too involved in Republic's business, beginning in the 1970s. As suggested by the content of previous chapters, this declensionist narrative had powerful roots in the workplace culture that was fostered both by the workers at these companies and their managers, and was often connected to issues of self-perception that hinged on questions of gender, race, and class identity.

Returning to the question of organized labor, the sharp contrast between the permissiveness of workplace rules in the 1950s versus the 1960s also complicated the question of unionization. Tallman worried that unions would have restricted the ability of the engineers to work with people on the shop floor. But from Caruso's account, it appears that by the 1960s engineering and shop were no longer supposed to interact freely anyway, as the result of new rules. Significantly, the segregation that Caruso described was one imposed by management, without the presence of a union. Other evidence examined below demonstrates that the corporate culture of Grumman became noticeably more hierarchical in the eleven years between Tallman's and Caruso's starting dates. What was really at stake here? At first glance, the question for men such as Tallman and Caruso seems to be one of facilitating community, or at least social interaction. People from different levels in the organization should be free to collaborate.

However, concerns with autonomy also relate to the theme of masculinity. For Tallman, union membership represented a dangerous loss of independence in the workplace, a quintessential masculine value. But for Caruso, great freedom was not really present at Grumman; it was something that had to be fought for. In a fascinating

reversal, the company unwittingly continued to reinforce masculinity for some workers like Caruso who now had to fight in order to demonstrate their total commitment to the job.[61] Perhaps recognizing the value of rewarding these types of maverick displays, the company tolerated and ultimately rewarded Caruso for his efforts.

Grumman was not the only company with rules or practices that undermined masculinity for engineers and eroded the ethos of a big, happy work family. Indeed, often the very architecture of the workplace undermined the suggestion of a large, harmonious unit. At one point in his oral history, Ben Ezra offered an expansive observation about offices at Republic. He remarked, "No, in the aircraft industry nobody had their own office. It was ... even the boss at that time. It would be a big, open area. He might have had a partition around his space, but everyone else just had a big open area with desks, sometimes the desks were butted up against each other, sometimes they were just lined up one right after the other. It was very open."[62] He observed that other aircraft manufacturers where he worked had similar arrangements: "open, bullpen areas, where you could look out and see fifty or a hundred guys working at the same time."[63] When I asked him why he thought the aircraft industry arranged its white-collar workers in this way, he offered the following reflection, based in part on his experience with Roy Yuen, an autocratic supervisor at Republic:

> They always said, the boss, the Roy Yuen type, wanted to get up, and all he wanted to see was "elbows and assholes," he just wanted to see people bending over their drafting boards and their elbows sticking up. He didn't want to see any heads sticking up, talking or bullshitting. He just wanted "elbows and assholes",

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[61] What did workers attribute as the cause for these changes in management policy? The following section, which examines the impact of affirmative action, will explore this in more detail.
[62] BE, 4/29/2003.
[63] Ezra also worked for Sikorsky Aviation and Boeing, prior to leaving the aircraft industry and going to work for Foster Wheeler, an engineering firm that focused on energy infrastructure.

> that's all they wanted. And you could do that in an open office. Of course if there's lots of cubicles, all you'll see are partitions. It was a way of, a blue-collar mentality of controlling the people. Have it open so that everyone can be seen.

As Ezra indicates, the social organization of these workers managed them by denying privacy and putting them on public display. Reminiscent of Michel Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, this arrangement induced a sense of permanent visibility among workers, ensuring the smooth functioning of power in the workplace. This sort of overt control mechanism, which was in place throughout the period under study, certainly does not bespeak a big, happy family. Rather, managers clearly worried about maximizing productivity and minimizing space requirements by putting the maximum number of individuals into the smallest area possible and subjecting them to constant observation. Grumman followed these same practices throughout the post-war period.

In addition to compromising the independence of white-collar workers, Grumman's management implemented other measures during the 1960s that also undermined the autonomy and masculinity of shop floor personnel. In 1968, Grumman introduced the Management Information System, or MIS, as a new means of identifying employees and tracking costs. An article in the *Plane News* announced dramatically, "MIS '68 … it's born."[64] The program was the brainchild of Jim Conners, director of Management Information Systems, who elaborated on the program in a separate interview.[65] He explained that the new program grew out of two separate initiatives. The first was a government requirement that Grumman issue new identification badges to all

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[64] "Men in Drop Hammer Launching MIS Pilot Tracking Program," *Grumman Plane News* 27, no. 1 (January 12, 1968): 4.
[65] "Some Q & A on New Badges: Identification, Relation to MIS," *Grumman Plane News* 27, no. 2 (January 26, 1968): 5.

employees every five years. The second, likely growing from increasing scrutiny from the Navy about cost overages, was a new electronic data method for tracking work-in-process in manufacturing.

Grumman's solution to the two problems was eminently practical – combine the two functions together and create a new badge identification system that also doubled as a time-card tracking method. The new MIS program allowed management to follow workers' specific job hours. The goal was likely to help with billing customers. Conners explained, "We can tell already that the new data will help us in cost analysis, in locating discrepancies and shortages in a hurry, and in future budgeting." To emphasize that this new identification system would not be used in a heavy-handed manner by management, Conners also emphasized the practical considerations that went into the decision: "That didn't mean that everyone would use it for tracking – it just eliminated the problem of having to have more than one identification badge." Though the precise meaning of "everyone" is unclear here, Conners may have been trying to reassure engineers and other office personnel that they would not become targets of the new tracking system.

Regardless of the practical intentions, workers subjected to MIS must have experienced the new system as cumbersome and otherwise problematic. They no longer had to punch into a clock merely at the beginning and end of their workday. With the MIS program, they now needed to return to the tracking terminals, which replaced the time clocks, at the start of each new job order. Most frustratingly, the tracking terminal could potentially reject their card, resulting in lost time. The *Plane News* explained, "A mistake in dialing the work order number causes the terminal to reject [it], and the

operator then re-dials correctly."[66] One can easily imagine people unable to continue working due to problems with work order numbers. Unfortunately, the paper did not include any worker reaction to the new program, but a warm reception is hard to imagine. Even if the company did not intend to undermine the independence of workers, the effect certainly would have been to impinge upon the autonomy of men on the shop floor, subjecting them to greater scrutiny without the benefit of union protection. Tellingly, Sperry and Republic do not appear to have adopted comparable programs.

In conclusion, the masculine working cultures of these large manufacturers began to change significantly during the early 1960s, which sheds light on important trends such as declining union membership. Employers made great efforts to instill a sense of benevolent paternalism and community within the workforce. But at the same time, employees also eschewed unions out of concern that their presence might exacerbate other emasculating trends. Companies like Grumman went to great lengths to encourage and reinforce the masculine identity of these male workers, even as they introduced other changes that undermined traditional notions of manhood, a combination that worked to the company's advantage when it came to staving off the unionization of its workforce. Workers also played an important part in this shift, framing themselves as mavericks and borrowing eclectically to forge a new sense of masculine identity during a time of unsettling transition. Management at Republic and Sperry enjoyed less harmonious relations with their workers, which may help to explain why these companies did not emphasize the manliness of employees and why employees ultimately chose to organize.

Perhaps the reason why employees like Tallman and Caruso linked a loss of autonomy and job security with the presence of unions can be explained through the

[66] "Men in Drop Hammer," 4.

lenses of community and gender. Some scholars rely on the modern welfare capitalism argument to explain the actions of workers like Tallman and Caruso, suggesting that employers succeeded in persuading employees to remain loyal. And in the case of companies like Grumman, this was true – the community was understood broadly to include all employees of the company regardless of their status in the corporation. In this model, joining a union was perceived as disadvantageous precisely because it would have institutionalized an unnecessary, class-based division between labor and management. However, as we have already seen, changes implemented by the employers began to disrupt gender identity within these communities. In addition, government initiatives such as affirmative action radically changed perceptions and gender relations in the workplace. The following section examines the impact these social changes had on identity formation for men and women working for all three companies.

Responses to the Breakup of the Big, Happy Family

By the 1970s, the ethos of the "big, happy family" at all three companies was no more. Indeed, as we have seen, Republic never fully succeeded in creating the kind of paternalistic relations that helped Grumman keep unions away for so many years. Sperry, despite its' interesting hybrid of corporate paternalism and strong unionism, also saw more conflicts in labor relations. Even Grumman, the company that had best established a familial rapport in the workplace, saw a dramatic decrease in morale. A sense of loss or decline ran as a leitmotif through the oral histories of former employees,

often pointing to the 1970s as the beginning of the end of the glory days. In hindsight, Grummanites blamed the breakup of their big, happy family on a variety of factors. Some held management responsible for parting with the traditions and vision of the company's founders. Others pointed to Grumman's deteriorating relationship with its biggest client, the Navy, as well as a slowing economy that led to fiscal setbacks. Other workers blamed government programs such as affirmative action for the dramatic change in workplace culture. Many workers found the new workplace of the 1970s disruptive to their identities and reacted critically. But for others, the breakup of the big, happy family and its proscribed gender order had a dramatically positive impact on their identities.

Many former employees from all three companies expressed regret over changes that took place in the workplace during their lifetimes. In particular, people who had started working prior to 1960 noted a dramatic shift in the division of labor and the structure of work processes. As the work (both engineering and manufacturing) became more complex, expanding numbers of employees began to divide and specialize in more finite tasks.[67] Prior to the 1960s (and especially before World War II), employees felt a greater personal connection to the products they worked on. People who started working after the 1960s rarely, if ever, discussed personal connections to aircraft or other items.

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[67] A number of scholars have discussed the development of alienation among workers. David Montgomery looks at alienation in the nineteenth century in *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). For alienation in the twentieth century, see Robert Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) and Barbara Garson, *All the Livelong Day: The Meaning and Demeaning of Routine Work* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975). For a discussion of computers and white-collar alienation, see Barbara Garson, *The Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers are Transforming the Office of the Future into the Factory of the Past* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988). Interestingly, Joshua B. Freeman observes that even as workers in other industries became increasingly alienated during the twentieth century, construction workers expressed unusually high levels of job satisfaction. See Joshua B. Freeman, "Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations," *Journal of Social History* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 732.

The sense of excitement and personal involvement functioned on other levels, too, including reinforcing gender identity. Interestingly, this trend seems to have continued from the pre-war into the post-war period. There were fewer people working at these companies prior to WW II, and so each employee was responsible for completing more tasks. In general, this led to a heightened sense of "ownership" among the workers – they felt a stronger sense of connection to the aircraft they worked on. In addition, the greater number of functions that these male workers had responsibility for contributed to a heightened sense of independence, which in turn reinforced a masculine identity.[68] Several of the oral histories fondly allude to the more craft-oriented work style of this period. For example, William Wait related how much he enjoyed working for Republic initially:

> It was fascinating. I mean, I enjoyed being around the airplanes. Or having the hardware, the whole piece of hardware, to work with. As distinct from going into the engineering department and working on one component of the airplane, the wing, or the landing gear, or the hydraulic system. But even there, you didn't work on the whole hydraulic system. You would start out installing a valve or an actuator, then you would ultimately, I shouldn't say ultimately, but your hope in there would be to get to the point where you were designing, the responsibility of the design, of the whole hydraulic system in the airplane. And you would have this guy do this, this guy do that, and so on.[69]

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[68] This final observation about independence and gender fits nicely with the changes examined in chapter one. Also, as discussed in chapter two, the sense of independence, of ownership, impacted male workers as they thought about whether to join a union or not. As we have seen in the case of Grumman, rejection of unionization was perceived as a reaffirmation of masculine identity. Certainly, most of the former employees would be surprised to hear themselves echoing Marx's ideas about alienation and labor. Marx wrote extensively on the theme of alienation and labor. Two of his points are particularly relevant here. First, workers become alienated from the products they are producing. Second, workers become estranged from the means of production, drawing less and less satisfaction from their work. See Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* trans. Martin Mulligan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959) and available online at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm

[69] WW, 4/15/05.

As noted earlier, Wait actually started with Republic in January 1944. He worked in flight test engineering until his retirement from Fairchild-Republic in 1984. Over the course of forty years within the same department, his responsibilities and rank changed considerably. By the time of his retirement, Wait was manager of the engineering flight test department. His responsibilities changed dramatically over the course of his career, which accounts for some of the transformations he experienced. Nevertheless, he still looked back fondly on his earlier experiences, in part because he had more direct contact with and control over the planes themselves.[70] As he noted, the difference between engineering and flight test engineering was considerable. While engineers in other departments worked on individual components of the planes during the design and manufacturing stages, the engineers in flight testing worked with the completed hardware itself – i.e., the planes.

Indeed, like Wait, many former employees openly expressed nostalgia for the Grumman (or Sperry, or even Republic) of decades past. The opening chapter included Mort Hans's thoughts on the stronger loyalty that workers of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s had for these companies because they felt a greater connection to the shared vision of the founders.[71] Other former workers' sense of nostalgia or loyalty was often tied to perceptions that mirrored Wait's or Hans's views. One example was Robert Tallman, a 71-year-old retired engineer from Grumman. After serving in the Navy, Tallman returned to Long Island and began working for Grumman in 1955. He started out on the

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[70] In fact, this was part of the founding vision of people like Leroy Grumman and Alexander deSeversky when they started these companies – building aircraft was a craft as much as a science.

[71] Hans did not express unqualified nostalgia for the pre-war world, since he preferred the increased ethnic diversity that followed, which he felt had benefited him (more on this below).

shop floor and quickly worked his way into engineering.[72] At one point during his oral history, Tallman was speaking about the sense of cohesiveness within the corporate culture at Grumman. He made the following observations:

> RT: Well. It started to disintegrate within the company after a while too.
> SP: Oh really?
> RT: It's a problem. My observation of companies, businesses – you get a founder to start a business, I don't care if it's the Grumman Corporation or a restaurant or a service station, the guy who initiates it has a vision. And he works to that vision, and that's his guidelines, and he has his guidelines and happen to be working well, and everything's hunky-dory. Now he will either start to expand or maybe pass it off to one of his coworkers. They may not have that vision, or the second sense of how to get this thing going. And then things start to break down.
> SP: And is that what you feel happened with Grumman?
> RT: Oh yes. First generation's the best. Second generation could be okay. Third generation ... you know it's the same old thing, easy come, easy go.
> SP: So what was the chronology within Grumman?
> RT: Well, Lew Evans was, I think, the last of the good ones.

Lew Evans was only president of Grumman from 1969 to 1972 when he died unexpectedly at the age of fifty-two.[73] Grumman chronicler Richard Thruelsen observed that Lew Evans shared several traits in common with Jake Swirbul, one of the founding members of the company and a much-beloved former executive. "Both men were effervescent, articulate, and constantly aware of the human factor in business and

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[72] Tallman explained that when he started working on the shop floor, there was a real sense of camaraderie – guys used to play practical jokes on each other, etc. This would include things like getting the new guy to get inside a plane being built and then rattle the plane around. Or subject them to "prop wash" in an attempt to scare them – when a propeller turns, it creates a draft, which insiders called "prop wash". RT, 3/3/2003.

[73] Evans died of a heart attack. See Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 323-4. Also, refer to Adina Genn, "1969: Grumman Engineers America's First Step," *Long Island Business News* 50 (March 14, 2003): 7. The Genn article features interviews with Bob E. Tallman and Michael F. Hlinko, two of the people I conducted oral histories with. This is the same Tallman quoted here; he characterized Evans' death as "premature" in the Genn article, further indicating the sense of loss that resulted from his passing away. Evans was also a bit unusual in that he was not a life-long Grumman employee. He served in the Army Air Corp during World War II, went on to graduate from Harvard Law School in 1947, and then spent four years as assistant counsel for the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington, DC. He was hired in 1951 as assistant counsel in the legal department, and by 1969 had worked his way up to President.

production."[74] Evans explicitly attributed the company's success to "team achievement" and emphasized that the "continuation of this spirit is most important to future success."[75] Indeed, there was a plethora of expressions like this – company publications from Grumman throughout the post-war period are full of references to teamwork and self-sacrifice. Furthermore, Tallman's observation that Grumman began to decline in some sense during the 1970s is also common in the oral histories and secondary literature.[76] Tallman's nostalgia should be familiar to historians of recent U.S. history. His invocation of Leroy Grumman's "vision" resonates with a common generational nostalgia found in commentators from Andy Rooney to Russell Jacoby to Robert Putnam – an earlier generation did things better.[77]

Alongside the sense of nostalgia, many workers expressed great pride in the companies where they worked and their personal achievements while there. Indeed, at one point Katherine O'Regan grew uncomfortable with some of my questions regarding race and ethnicity at Grumman. She commented, "Well, I don't like the emphasis on things that aren't related to business, because all of these don't relate to the job that was

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[74] Thruelsen, *The Grumman Story*, 324. Both men were also "inexhaustible" in their business lives, and "both had a sharp eye for new business opportunities and the drive to go after them at full steam." Over the course of his career with the company, Evans was an important part of Grumman's acquiring contracts for the F-14 and the Lunar Excursion Module, both of which were tremendous successes for the company.
[75] See "Year-end Review," *Grumman Plane News* 27, no. 1 (January 12, 1968): 1. This was an annual address by Chairman of the Board Clint Towl (one of the founding figures of the company) and President Lew Evans on the 'State of the Company,' delivered by closed-circuit TV and film to "Grummanites stationed in all parts of the country."
[76] See Joshua Stoff, "Grumman Versus Republic: Success and Failure in the Aviation Industry on Long Island," *Long Island Historical Journal* 1, no. 2. Other commentators such as George Skurla, a former president of Grumman, make similar observations, insisting that the Grumman story is one of "unfulfilled destiny," dating back to the financial crises that hit the company beginning in the early 1970s. See George M Skurla and William H Gregory, *Inside the Iron Works: How Grumman's Glory Days Faded* (Annapolis, Md. : Naval Institute Press, 2004), 42.
[77] Though these commentators feature very different reconstructions and explanations of the past, the theme of nostalgia is a common denominator. For example, the topic of the Greatest Generation has produced a flurry of publications in recent years. Aside from Tom Brokaw's best-selling paean, *The Greatest Generation* (Delta, 2001), see Leonard Steinhorn, *The Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boom Legacy* (Thomas Dunne, 2006).

being done. Which was production and technical excellence, the work was tremendous. And the accomplishments were tremendous. And these are all just little asides that really don't amount to much. You know, that was just part of the working enviro ... so we had an Italian section? So what? You know?"[78] O'Regan's discomfort with discussing ethnic divisions at Grumman indicates the deep affection she continued to feel for the company. She did not wish to dwell on a subject that might reflect negatively on the company. Clearly, O'Regan had a great deal of pride for Grumman and her own contributions to its success. Her discomfort may also indicate ostensible "blinders" of an earlier generation to such differences.

In fact, some former Grummanites also expressed a measure of defensiveness when discussing the company's relationship to the surrounding community. In response to questions about Grumman's contributions to neighboring towns, Robert Tallman volunteered:

> RT: I'm pro-Grumman, so you know.
> SP: Why did you say that just now?
> RT: Just a statement. The questions you're asking, you know, what was the benefits Grumman had to the community. And I'm pro-Grumman because I think they had a hell of a lot of benefits.
> SP: Yes, what I'm interested in is whether that was the perception in the community...
> RT: I don't think they really understood what Grumman was really doing for them. The problem is that the people who were here say in the thirties when Grumman moved in and cleared out this field and dynamited all the stumps out of here and built the facility, and during the war there was more of a camaraderie in the community because of the war and Grumman and what they were doing for the war effort. And we could see all these airplanes that were defending the country. The later people coming out didn't experience this.

[78] KO, 7/10/2003.

Tallman's observation about the changing relationship between the company and surrounding towns fits with the nostalgic narrative about the decline of Grumman more generally. In this case, these recollections also match the historical record. As the communities around the company's various Long Island facilities built up, Grumman found itself dealing with complaints regarding noise, taxes, and pollution.[79]

In addition to new challenges in community relations, a declining relationship with the Navy also affected the corporate culture at Grumman during the 1970s. Perhaps Tallman summed this development up best when he said, "Grumman ... used to have the best relationship with the customer, with the Navy. And later on it got worse and worse and worse, they hated our guts."[80] This change helps to explain the sense of nostalgia that many workers expressed. The perception that the circumstances of the company changed during the 1970s is accurate.[81] As discussed earlier, Republic experienced

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[79] Noise was an ongoing issue for years, beginning in the 1950s. For just one example, see "2 Mystery Blasts Rock Long Island," *New York Times* (October 15, 1952): 58. The question of Grumman paying property taxes to local townships came up periodically as well. For example, see "L.I. Town Baffled on Grumman Tax," *New York Times* (March 9, 1958): 62. Grumman was not necessarily a good corporate citizen when it came to pollution, and environmental concerns reached a peak in the 1980s. For a sample, see "L.I. Concerns Face Fines on Pollution," *New York Times* (September 29, 1985): LI10.

[80] RT, 3/3/2003. For more on the declining relationship between GAEC and the Navy, see Skurla and Gregory, *Inside the Iron Works*. Indeed, this problem has proved to be the death-knell of many firms. For example, Curtiss-Wright was the second largest manufacturer in the U.S. in 1945. Though it remains in business today, the company is a mere shadow of its former self. What was the reason for this downfall? During the 1950s, the firm alienated the Air Force and Navy, its primary customers. The company's management "refused to accept technological risks and demanded ever-higher guaranteed rates of return from the military." As a consequence, the Air Force turned to Pratt & Whitney, another manufacturer of jet engines, in 1957. See Eugene Gholz and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Restructuring the U.S. Defense Industry," *International Security* 24, no. 3 (Winter 1999/2000): 5-51. See especially their footnotes 40-42. Gholz and Sapolsky point out that several big name manufacturers did, in fact, experience sharp reverses during the Cold War, including Fairchild, Republic, Vought, and others. Republic suffered irreversible losses in 1963 when the Air Force decided it no longer wanted the F-105 fighter. However, this decision was also related to deteriorating relations between the Air Force and Republic. Indeed, labor relations within these companies also deteriorated at the same time. However, in fairness, many of the oral history participants also expressed continued affection and loyalty to Grumman, as well as Republic and Sperry. The generalization that Grumman began to somehow decline during the 1970s is just that – a generalization.

[81] In fact, the company underwent a sharp reversal between 1970 and 1972, complete with the kind of massive layoffs that it had managed to avoid during the 1960s, unlike Republic and Sperry. For a sampling of news, see "Grumman Announces it Plans to Lay Off 5,000 by End of '70," *New York Times* (February

similar problems with the Air Force, but its problems began earlier, during the 1950s and 1960s.

The deteriorating relationship with the Navy affected Grumman and its workers in a number of ways, contributing to the end of the paternalistic dynamic. One of the ways that Grumman's declining rapport with the Navy upset its welfare capitalism was that the company was no longer able to pay big production bonuses to employees. One former Grummanite explained that starting in World War II and going right up to 1972 the company paid annual bonuses, sometimes two, in fact: a Thanksgiving bonus and a Christmas bonus. These could be sizeable – they were usually the equivalent of three weeks' pay. In 1972, the Pentagon and Congress pressured the company into changing this system and incorporating the bonus into employees' base salary. As an explanation, the former employee observed that "to make it in this industry you have to have contacts in Washington." By 1972, the company had big problems with the F-14 and its relationship with the Navy really began to collapse. The F-14 was a carrier-based fighter that ended up costing so much to produce, Grumman held the Navy up for extra money. In response to the crisis of the F-14, the Pentagon and Congress seriously began to investigate Grumman's business. This was part of a larger attack on, and decline of, defense budgets. Critics censured bonuses; "How is it that you can't produce the planes in sufficient quantity at the right price, and yet you're paying your employees a big production bonus anyway?"[82] This development coincided with the end of Evans' brief time as the head of the company, which may have added to the perception of Evans as

28, 1970): 45; "Pres Evans Says He Expects Co Employment to Level Off at 24,000 in '71 from Payroll of 37,100 in '68," *New York Times* (February 14, 1971): 95.

[82] Anonymous interview, Northrup Grumman History Center, Bethpage, NY, 3/3/03. For more, see Anthony Ripley, "Senate Hearings Set," *New York Times* (Dec 13, 1972): 91.

"the last of the good ones."[83] Moreover, changes to the payroll structure, as well as unwelcome national headlines regarding Congressional hearings, may have also added to the impression that the big, happy family was breaking up. As Tallman summed up, "I'd say seventies those things were starting to go downhill."

In the case of annual bonuses, the Pentagon and Congress eventually compromised Grumman's paternalistic payroll practices. Rather than playing the generous employer, showering workers with additional awards, the company was forced to eliminate this measure and incorporate the bonus money into base salaries (or risk losing disgruntled workers). Some observers might view this breakdown of paternalism as a positive development. However, the employees themselves did not view paternalism as inherently bad.[84]

The deteriorating relationship with the Navy impacted Grumman's labor relations in a second way, too. In addition to being paternalistic, Grumman was also successful in labor relations because management emphasized informal employee relationships.[85] With the increased scrutiny of the Navy and Congress, Grumman management lost some of the relaxed style that was so noteworthy during the early decades of the company's existence.

Although the actions of Congress and the Pentagon during the 1970s certainly affected workplace culture and morale, they did not draw the same sort of responses that

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[83] Adding to the problem of morale was the news that Grumman would be laying off workers in 1972, following its loss of the space shuttle contract to North American Rockwell Corporation. See "Many at Grumman Face Layoffs in Loss of Contract; Many at Grumman Face Loss of Jobs," *New York Times* (Jul 28, 1972): 1

[84] Recall Katherine O'Regan's and Donald Riehl's non-pejorative characterization of Grumman as "paternalistic" in the previous chapter.

[85] Recall the earlier discussion of the perceptions employees – particularly Grummanites – had about the limitations that a union presence would have imposed on them (one concern being that it would have upset the informal workplace relations enjoyed by so many). Also, as discussed earlier, the informal culture at Grumman prior to the late 1960s may have reflected strong connections to the Navy.

another government intervention did. Affirmative action evoked a myriad of reactions. Some former employees thought it was a positive development, while others felt it contributed to the overall decline of the defense companies where they had worked.

Affirmative action, of course, refers to a number of programs created to implement Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination with respect to employment.[86] The African American civil rights movement used this section of the Civil Rights Act to pursue economic justice through access to good jobs. In turn, the black freedom movement influenced the development of other social movements such as the women's movement and the Chicano movement during the 1970s, which had a continued impact on workplaces in a variety of industries, including aircraft production. The topic of race, race relations at work, and affirmative action elicited a number of interesting observations and anecdotes during the oral histories.

As discussed previously, the workforce at all three companies prior to 1970 was overwhelmingly white and male. Unfortunately, few statistical records of the workforces have survived. Those that do exist do not contain information about the racial composition of the workers. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that all three companies had very few nonwhite employees. One telling sketch comes from Mort Hans, the retired engineer from Sperry discussed earlier. He was one of the few people who discussed affirmative action in an oral history unprompted. His thoughts on affirmative action were generally positive, but he began by explaining how homogenous the workforce at Sperry was, right up to the late 1960s. He stated flatly, "There weren't

[86] A recent and engaging work on this subject is Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (New York: Russell Sage; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). MacLean argues that so many workers filed lawsuits under Title VII (which barred discrimination in employment) that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was forced to acknowledge systemic discrimination and respond with the set of policies that came to be known as affirmative action.

very many blacks."[87] In fact, to illustrate the extreme sensitivity of the whole subject of race, he related a story that began, "I needed to see an engineer who worked on the other side of the plant […] which was, I don't know, felt like it was half a mile away." As this suggests, the plant was enormous. In fact, it was so big, Hans explained, "We used to have three-wheel tricycles for driving down the main aisle, which was called Broadway, and you could ride the tricycles down to the far end of the building." As one can imagine, the size of this plant made locating people a challenge. Hans was given directions on how to find the engineer he was looking for, "And I was told, you know, go over to Broadway, walk down here, then make a left turn there. Go into this bunch of cubicles […] Open the door, there'll be another bunch of cubicles. Then count over four rows, go down three aisles, and you'll find a cubicle there. And the guy you want […] he's in that cubicle." Armed with these byzantine directions, Hans continued:

> So I go through, trying to remember all of these instructions, and I get to the place, and I get to the cubicle. And I find the guy, and I break out laughing. Why do I break out laughing? He's the only black engineer in the whole goddamn place. They simply could have told me go see the black engineer in that area. Right? So I was going here, there, there, there. They were afraid to say, you know, afraid to identify the guy in that way.

Hans was the only person to relate a story like this to illustrate the relative dearth of nonwhites. Other people generally split on the question. Some agreed that few blacks worked for these companies, while others recalled many African Americans working for Grumman, Sperry, and Republic. Again, absent any statistical data, these conflicting memories and impressions are difficult to reconcile, highlighting one of the challenges of working with oral history. Another form of anecdotal evidence to help resolve the issue

[87] MH, 7/22/2003.

is the photographs from the company newspapers. In general, the vast majority of people pictured in these publications, particularly prior to the 1960s, were white.[88]

Indeed, Mort Hans suggested that the corporate culture at Sperry (and in the engineering field in general) was a particular kind of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture prior to the 1960s. However, in a short time, he noticed a dramatic increase in the diversity of Sperry and other engineering firms. He elaborated:

> But the whole thing [engineering as a WASP-y field] changed because by the sixties, for example, at Sperry you had all kinds of people who weren't from the mainstream were now in positions of management. A lot of Catholics, a lot of Jews suddenly began to appear in management positions. People from all kinds of European countries were emerging. These were mostly people who had went back to school under the GI bill and got their education. And they kind of paved the way for me by the time I got started because a lot of these people were already spread out in the major companies that were located in, very important, in large urban areas.

Hans was well situated to observe these developments since he worked at Sperry from 1959-1962 and 1964-1979.[89] In fact, the first time he went to Sperry was sometime around 1953 for an interview. The experience was uncomfortable; he felt he was bucking a WASP culture. The interviewer was unimpressed with Hans' degree in physics, and told him to go back and do a graduate engineering degree. However, when Hans ended up working for Sperry just seven or eight years later, it no longer seemed to be a factor

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[88] The great majority of them were also male. Carol Nelson, who is discussed in more detail below, worked for Grumman from 1966 to 2000. Beginning in 1980, she assumed the job of tracking and awarding service pins to mark employment anniversaries (a Grummanite would receive a pin for landmark anniversaries such as five years with the company, ten years with the company, etc.). She observed, "Well, that's the way it was at Grumman, it was exclusively male. I mean, very few women compared to the men. Which, and I knew that because I handed out service pins. I mean I knew that I didn't order near as many service pins for women as I did for men. So you knew that." CN, 1/13/2005.

[89] Hans was born in Brooklyn in 1928. His parents were Hungarian and Jewish (in fact, he spent his first few years in Europe).

there and he no longer had the perception that the company was a WASP-y institution. As indicated here, he welcomed these changes in the field.

Hans' observation dovetails nicely with the discussion of ethnicity and race in chapter one. Indeed, the large Italian American population on Long Island, and at these companies, framed some of the workers' responses regarding affirmative action and race relations in particular. Other oral histories offer additional evidence about both the presence of ethnicity in the workplace and the role it played culturally within these corporations. For example, Donald Riehl offered the following example from his time with the experimental shop at Grumman.[90] The company needed additional space and walled off an area in the main production building. Riehl continued, "That walled-off area was staffed in large measure by people of Italian heritage. They were there a long time and for whatever reason a lot of these old tradesmen were Italian. So the place was referred to lovingly as the guinea garage, which was this structure around this area where they built it."[91] Riehl confirms that many of the older Grumman tradespeople were Italian, and furthermore that this was perhaps a source of playful teasing or competition between workers. A similar dynamic was at work at Republic too, where, William Wait tells us, the Air Force referred to the entire company as "the guinea garage."[92]

Italian Americans represented a large portion of the population on Long Island and also of the workforces for Grumman, Republic, and Sperry. Italian Americans came to New York in two large waves. The first group came after the turn of the twentieth

[90] At the time, Riehl was involved in production planning for the experimental shop. As the title might suggest, this meant he was assisting in the production of prototypes of new airplanes under development.
[91] DR, 7/9/03.
[92] WW, 4/15/05. This was not done in formal documents, of course.

century.[93] The second, larger wave came following World War II. Table 5.1 indicates the growth of the Italian population on Long Island during the first half of the twentieth century. The figures here demonstrate that the number of white people born in Italy actually decreased over time, dropping from 14,994 in 1940 to only 4,915 in 1950. On the other hand, people who identified themselves as being of Italian extraction increased dramatically during the forty years following WW II. Table 5.2 indicates the number of people who identified themselves as "Persons of Foreign Stock indicating Italy as Country of Origin" for the U.S. Census. In 1960, 8.3 percent of the population of Nassau and Suffolk County identified themselves as being of Italian descent. By 1990, 27 percent of residents in Nassau and Suffolk County identified themselves as being wholly or partially of Italian extraction.[94]

Unfortunately, because statistical profiles of the workforces at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry do not provide ethnic concentrations, it is difficult to provide an exact figure as to what percentages of the employees were of Italian extraction. However, anecdotal evidence from oral histories and other sources suggests it was sizeable before the war and remained so afterwards. In addition to the quotes here and earlier from Mort Hans, Donald Riehl and William Wait, the oral histories of Robert Tallman, Carol Nelson, Mary Bloom, and Brigid Murphy all make specific references to the large presence of Italian Americans, particularly at Grumman and Republic.

Evidence from union archives prior to the 1970s also testifies to the strong presence and influence of Italians in both Republic and the surrounding community. As

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[93] This coincided with and was part of the massive wave of immigration from Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1900 over six million Italians, most from the south, had left for other countries. The greatest number of these ended up in the U.S. Salvatore J. LaGumina, *Images of America: Long Island Italians* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 7.

[94] LaGumina, *Images of America*, 111.

discussed in chapter two, the IAM went through a challenging organizing drive at Republic Aviation. Perhaps frustrated by the progress of the campaign, IAM General Vice President S.L. Newman proposed replacing one of the organizers, "Brother Mastriani". Martin J. Buckley, Grand Lodge Representative and future head of the local, wrote a letter to Newman asking him to reconsider. One of the reasons for retaining Mastriani, Buckley argued, was that his ethnicity increased his appeal among RACers. He noted, "On behalf of Bro. Mastriani, I would like to say that his ability to speak Italian as well as his manner in which he conducts himself while in the territory has been of great assistance to our organizing efforts. This area in and about the plant is predominately Italian."[95]

A second reference to Italian as the lingua franca among some Republic employees comes from the case of a letter sent to the union on behalf of Catherine Duymovich, an employee that the company dismissed in 1952.[96] Evidently, the IAM was unable to assist Duymovich in regaining her job. Frustrated, Duymovich asked a co-worker to help her write a letter to the IAM to seek further assistance. The letter suggests that, among other things, one of the reasons why Duymovich was fired was that she

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[95] Letter from Martin J. Buckley to S.L. Newman dated May 3, 1949, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, Roll 340

[96] The reasons for Duymovich's dismissal are not entirely clear. The letter that this story is drawn from explains that she was hurt in an accident while working in October 1951. When she returned to work in March 1952, further problems developed. According to the letter, Duymovich became aware of an illegal gambling ring that was taking place at the plant with the full knowledge of both Republic and union personnel. Concerned that she might expose them, these same people set about to get Duymovich fired, which finally occurred in April 1952. See Letter from Catharine Duymovich to Dear Sir [A. J. Hayes, International President, IAM], nd, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, roll 340. Unfortunately, although the IAM file contains two other letters from union officials conferring on this case, neither of them offers an alternative account or explanation as to why Duymovich was fired. One of the General Vice Presidents reassured Hayes, "We are familiar with this case and it has had extensive handling by the officials of Lodge 1984, including cooperation with doctors, in trying to secure a proper medical and mental analysis of Mrs. Duymovich but apparently her condition is such that nothing can be done at this time." Letter from Fred H. Coonley to Mr. A. J. Hayes, November 17, 1952, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, roll 340.

became aware of a bookmaking ring that was operating at the plant. The letter explained that Duymovich was fluent in several languages, including Italian. The writer continued, "When the bets and cash were being handled, with full knowledge of persons in supervisory capacity, they invariably spoke in Italian."[97] While the allegation of potential union corruption is intriguing in its own right (and fits well with some of the sources of anti-union sentiment explored in earlier chapters), the key point of reference for this section is the allusion to spoken Italian. Along with the other sources sited, the references from Duymovich and Buckley suggest that there were enough employees at Republic who spoke Italian that they formed a subculture of their own within the company. This is not to suggest that all Italian Americans at Republic were involved in bookmaking, but rather that various members of this group were able to deploy various ethnic characteristics such as language, or perhaps even mannerisms, in order to carry on discussions they might wish to keep less public.[98]

The Italian-American population in the workforce and Long Island more generally affected racial discourse.[99] The subject of Italian American ethnicity and race has inspired a number of scholars. In particular, some fascinating work explores the way

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[97] Letter from Catharine Duymovich to Dear Sir [A. J. Hayes, International President, IAM], nd, Wisconsin Historical Society, IAM records, roll 340.

[98] Although both of the union sources here speak to the presence of Italian Americans (both first and second generation) at Republic specifically during the 1940s and 1950s, I have included them in this section because they indicate the prominence of Italian Americans following the war. This fits with Hans' observation about the increased entry of various European ethnic groups into previously selective workplaces such as Republic and Grumman.

[99] As discussed in chapter one, this is a difficult distinction to make – scholars disagree on what constitutes "ethnicity" versus "race," or how to separate the two. Some argue that ethnicity consists of a constellation of cultural traits like language and religion, while physical traits determine race, even if these traits are subjective. Others argue that membership in an ethnic group is voluntary, whereas race is not. Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage, 1997), 81, 74-75, as cited in Thomas A. Guglielmo, "'No Color Barrier': Italians, Race, and Power in the United States," in Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, Ed., *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 29-43, 32. Guglielmo argues that the appropriate distinction is between race and color, where color refers to a social category rather than a physical description.

Italian Americans embraced a "white" identity, and how this shaped their relationship to people of color.[100] As Thomas A. Guglielmo observes, Americans considered Italians white from the moment they first arrived in the US. "If Italians were racially undesirable in the eyes of many Americans, they were white just the same."[101] The status of Italian Americans as white influenced their relations with people of color at Grumman, Republic, and Sperry, both before and after affirmative action. Most people (including Eugene Burnett, a former machinist at Republic and the only African American in my oral histories) insisted that there was no overt racism in the workplace. However, revealing moments of racial interactions were present.

John Caruso related a very rich story that illustrated perceptions about race and interactions between white and black workers. Caruso was a second-generation Italian-American.[102] He was also the same engineer who threatened to bomb an uncooperative subcontractor earlier in this chapter. When asked about perceptions regarding minorities in the workplace, he responded, "I'll tell you something, I don't know of any instance where there was any race confrontation. You know, something that could be dumped into the race problem. No." However, this jogged his memory, and he returned to the story of General Westmoreland and the radar-muffling device. The rest of that story richly

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[100] An excellent collection of thoughtful and engaging work can be found in Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, Ed., *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See particularly Jennifer Guglielmo's introductory essay, which provides an overview of the most important work in the field.
[101] Guglielmo, "No Color Barrier," 30. This quote hints at how complex racial discourse about identity was at the time. According to naturalization officials, Italian immigrants "color" was "white," their "complexion" was "dark," and their "race" was "Italian."
[102] His parents were both from Italy, came independently and met in New York. His mother was a midwife, graduated from the University of Palermo. She practiced midwifery in the U.S. as well. His father was a barber, he operated several barbershops, he was also a musician, and he was a ship fitter during WW II (doing carpentry in the cabins, etc).

combines a number of the themes from this chapter. First, Caruso described the bureaucratic measures he needed to overcome:

> JC: Well, I cut a lot of corporate corners. I went to the company that was making it for us. I coerced them into giving it up. And then I went into the production department to try it out on one of our systems. And I forced them to do that also, over and above their objections. And tested the unit. And packaged it, brought it over there, without getting a DD-250 signed off. You know what a DD-250 is?
> SP: I do not. What is a DD-250?
> JC: Every piece of equipment that gets sold to the Navy gets signed off so we can get paid. It's okay, and you've got it, and you pay us. I did not get a signed DD-250 on it, knowing full well that higher up orders, I felt, were going to cover me. They want that unit at any cost. They could not fault me on getting the thing out, operating and getting it out, along those lines.

Again, we see the problems Caruso encountered in trying to actually practice "total commitment" to his job. We also see the growing bureaucracy at Grumman, with a Kafka-esque insistence on forms and procedures. The growing tension between this bureaucratic impulse and the traditional "loosey-goosey" culture of Grumman is also on full display. As illustrated here, Caruso had to circumvent several bureaucratic steps. Not least of these was following or honoring the contract with the subcontractor. By intimidating them, Caruso was likely breaking the terms of their contract. Within Grumman, Caruso also pushed through the production department. Either of these steps could have resulted in serious consequences for Caruso. However, he actually got into trouble with someone from another department: Quality Control. The second half of the story suggests one of the ways that race emerged as an issue at Grumman:

> But one of the inspectors was a black guy. And somehow, they convinced him to shed some lousy light on this thing. And so they tried to nab me, that I made some derogatory remarks to this guy. And I hit the roof. I said, I didn't do this and if they're going to pursue this, I resign. You have my resignation under those

> terms. Immediately. I spoke to my people about it. They backed me to the hilt. And the squash went away. But it ruffled a lot of feathers.

Whether a genuine wrong had taken place is, of course, impossible to verify. Caruso clearly believed this was an example of another department trying to impose control over its work jurisdiction. Caruso subsequently described a reconciliation:

> JC: And then later on of course I talked to the guy and he says "Hey John, I hope you realize my predicament." The black guy. I says, "Yes I do, I have nothing against you at all. It's a political piece of crap."
> SP: What did he mean by that?
> JC: Well, they probably told him, "Didn't he say something like this?" Or like, you know. "Well, he might have." He forced me to do the, you know. He's black, I'm white. Do something. They can't get me on the fact that I went from here to here to [Vietnam].
> SP: Interesting.
> JC: Well, yeah. You can, you put enough pressure on people.

This narrative sheds light on the role that perceptions about race played in the recollections of some workers. In Caruso's memory, race was not a genuine issue, though others occasionally used it as a pretense to pursue other ends. In this case, he believed that somebody from the Quality Control department had persuaded a black colleague to accuse Caruso of making racist remarks. To demonstrate the kind of easy rapport he had with black coworkers, Caruso recalled another engineer he worked with:

> JC: Yeah, very qualified. And he was always a sharp dresser. Would really dress, a sharp dresser. And like I said, always a sharp dresser. So one day he comes in and he was looking really ... I mean, everything matched. You know, I says, "Charlie," I says, "I tell you, boy you are the epitome of fashion, look at that. Brown suit, brown tie, let me see your socks, brown socks, brown shoes. Dammit," I says, "you even got brown skin." Well he cracked up. He laughed like hell. He says, "John, you're a character." That's the interface. We worked close by.
> SP: So you were comfortable?

> JC: Yeah, he was comfortable. "And you even got brown skin." And there it is. Why should there ...? There was no animosity. Like I said, the only one was that other one from QC.

Caruso's recollections of this brief joke with a coworker suggest a number of dynamics at work. The emphasis on Charlie's fashion sense is potentially loaded with meaning. One interpretation of the butt of the joke is that Caruso was reminding Charlie that his skin was brown, no matter how much he dressed up. This is perhaps supported by the fact that Caruso was accused of racism once before. Furthermore, it would certainly be hard to imagine Caruso openly discussing being racist thirty or forty years after the fact. On the other hand, Caruso may very well have been playing the role of provocateur (as often seemed to be the case, as we have seen already), mischievously making a joke about social norms without really subscribing to the underlying, racist values. Indeed, Caruso's recollection of Charlie's reaction suggests this was how Charlie interpreted the moment … Caruso was being "a character."[103]

Despite Caruso's and other's observations about the absence of malice between white and black coworkers, tensions were surely present. In particular, resentment began to emerge in response to affirmative action programs. Mort Hans's favorable impressions of affirmative action and the diversity it introduced to Sperry were somewhat unusual. When I asked Robert Tallman about any prejudice that might have taken place at Grumman, he thought for a moment and then responded, "Not really. I think that there was probably some reverse discrimination." When asked to elaborate, he continued,

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[103] As mentioned earlier, Eugene Burnett also suggested that he did not encounter any overt racism during his time at Republic in the early 1950s. He said, "No, not that I remember. Everybody was friendly, there's coworkers, you're working with Germans, Irish, Italians. You know, if you saw somebody you didn't like, you didn't talk to them. But I don't remember any … and my buddies, we met, I don't remember how we met, but they certainly treated me top notch."

"Well, equal opportunity I think was a little bit overdone in that we had women coming in as engineering types and they would get preferential treatment over the guys because they were females, regardless of qualifications. And if a person had say a Hispanic surname and he would take advantage of that which I think was pushing the envelope. I'm part American Indian and I never pushed that." Tallman's formulation of "equal opportunity" as an inherently undemocratic violation of the rights of some workers (in this case, white men) mirrors the conservative argument against affirmative action more generally.[104] Intriguingly, critics at Grumman expressed the same concern about unions violating the rights of qualified men by protecting other, presumably less qualified, workers. Tallman made the point about affirmative action promoting incompetence explicit when he concluded, "And if you were a black female, why, you could do no wrong. You know what I mean? Unfortunately, we had some secretarial help, they were totally useless. But couldn't do anything about it." Clearly, some white men were unhappy with the changes that resulted from affirmative action programs.

On the other hand, white women that worked for Grumman and Republic were generally upbeat in their assessment of affirmative action since many of them benefited from these programs. When I asked Katherine O'Regan about her relationship to Grumman, she initially responded, "Depends upon what year you're talking about. The war years, we were treated differently than the men. We were certainly on a different level, you know, we were looked down upon. On a different pay scale, we didn't get equal pay for equal work." As discussed earlier, O'Regan worked on the shop floor during World War II and encountered various forms of harassment. When I asked her

[104] For an insightful examination of the use of rhetoric regarding rights by whites in support of segregation, see Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

when this began to change, she said, "Well, after the start of women's lib. Martin Luther was the father of all the liberation movements, not just black liberation, all of them. And the first thing we noticed was they no longer had separate lists of women employees. All employees were listed alphabetically. So that they could no longer discriminate." O'Regan explicitly linked the women's liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s to the African American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and was grateful for the benefits she gained as a result.

In other words, while many workers lamented the changing workplace of the 1970s, others readily welcomed the change. In particular, many white women were eager to access better paying, more prestigious jobs. Carol Nelson was also clear on the impact that the women's movement had on her career and life. Nelson began working for Grumman in 1966, one month after graduating from SUNY Farmingdale with an AAS degree. Her first interview went very well. In fact, she hit it off so well with the man conducting the interview that he decided to give her a special placement:

> And he said "I could get you a position." You know it was going to be secretarial. So, he said, "But, I'm going to try to get you a position working for one man." Most of the gals that were hired at that point went in to work for like forty guys, in like group secretarial pools. And they reported to kind of like a mother-hen, so to speak. And he just liked me, he said "I'm going to find you a really good job where you work for one person." And he said just hang in with me and I'll find it, and within a month he had set me up with three different people. And I wound up with a really good job, I was hired into the marketing department, which is called business development.[105]

Nelson's aside ("You know it was going to be secretarial") is revealing. Even with an Associate's degree in advertising, she understood that any position for her at Grumman would involve secretarial work. This suggests quite strongly that the sort of fixed gender

[105] CN, 1/13/2005.

roles that management and workers imposed during the late 1940s and early 1950s (as discussed in chapter two) still dominated the Grumman workplace into the mid-1960s. Nelson understood that her role would be ancillary, even though she had impressed the interviewer and was going to land a choice job. As she elaborate, "It was pretty well known that women were not going to … were pushed down more, weren't in the higher positions, years ago, in the '60s and '70s. […] It was pretty well known that the men had the cream. You know, they had the jobs. Men got away with more."

Nelson remained at Grumman for the next thirty-four years, and witnessed some dramatic changes in women's status. To begin with, her position and duties changed considerably. In 1976, she went to work for the vice president of public affairs, which was the beginning of a new career trajectory for her. Her title was Executive Assistant. She explained what this meant, "Even though I still worked for him, did his secretarial work, he gave me administrative work to do, which is the budgeting. I was helping out with budgets, and raises, different things in payroll." On the face of it, this may not sound like a significant change. However, recall Donald Riehl's description of the way different jobs were previously gender-specific. In particular, he pointed out that the position of administrative assistant was "mostly a man's job" during the 1950s and 1960s.[106] Nelson's promotion to the role of Executive Assistant in 1976 represented a break with traditional gender roles.

Like O'Regan, Nelson attributed some of her success at Grumman to improvements in the working lives of women throughout the United States. She recalled, "Things started turning around, probably somewhere in the seventies. Because I can,

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[106] DR, 7/9/2003. To be clear, Riehl also specifically referred to the kind of payroll and administrative matters that Nelson mentioned. For a full discussion of this, see chapter two.

Jack Bierwirth came in ’72, I think. ’71 or ’72. I don’t know, maybe it was just life in general, things were turning around for women.” By the 1980s, the company had promoted her to administrator and then manager. In this respect, Nelson’s career continued to challenge gender norms (or, perhaps more accurately, reflected newly emerging ones). She observed that Grumman was no longer the exclusively male space she had first encountered. When I asked what she attributed this to, she referred to the women’s movement more generally, “Well, I think it was just … it became not so much a man’s world anymore. I think women were just breaking out. [She laughs] I mean they were. They wanted to move forward.” Clearly, Nelson welcomed the affirmative action-inspired changes in corporate culture and U.S. society more generally.

In conclusion, the gender, race, and class hierarchy that workers and managers had established waned during the 1970s. This chapter represents the final stage in the periodization of my dissertation. Ultimately, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s the actions of employers themselves, as well as the interventions of federal and state governments, had a dramatic impact on labor relations in all three settings. Examining the experiences of people like Ben Ezra reveals the dark underside of “community” – the more explicit forms of control that workers were subjected to, even as the companies tried to convince employees they were part of one big, happy family. Indeed, the workers thought they were part of a big, happy family, even as they resisted some of these measures – John Caruso’s stories highlight the complex and interesting ways that these workers exerted agency in their lives. In the end, companies like Grumman embraced controlling efficiency programs like MIS, eschewing the happy family approach. Simultaneously, government interventions in the form of Pentagon and Congressional

scrutiny, as well as affirmative action programs, undermined the company culture at Grumman that reinforced an autonomous, masculine, and white identity for male workers. Indeed, oral histories indicate that a number of white men noticed and disliked these changes. Workers from Grumman had held up their end of the welfare capitalism promise and refused to unionize. In the end, despite this loyalty, the company's management did not deliver on their end of the bargain.

Tables

Table 5.1 Italian Population (White Persons Born in Italy) Source: U.S. Census

	Nassau Population	Suffolk Population	Combined
1930	9,145	4,171	13,316
1940	9,973	5,021	14,994
1950	3,579	1,336	4,915
1960			

Table 5.2 Persons of Foreign Stock indicating Italy as Country of Origin. Source: U.S. Census

	Nassau Population	Suffolk Population	Combined
1930			
1940			
1950			
1960	108,646	53,996	162,642

Conclusion

The story of Grumman, Republic, Sperry, and the people who worked for them demonstrate important developments in the world of large industrial manufacturers during and after World War II. While scholars have studied the decline in unionization that took place in locations like Long Island following the war, most have given short shrift to the cultural dynamics that played a significant part. Workers worried about the way that unionization might impact their jobs and, in turn, their identities.

This project represents an original contribution to the field of history for a number of reasons. It expands upon existing workplace literature by contrasting case studies of companies that were unionized and nonunionized. It combines social and cultural history by drawing upon a variety of sources, including oral histories, company archives, union records, memoirs, media reports, photographs, editorial cartoons, and census data. By joining the methods of cultural and social history, this work sheds light on the personal and political choices these workers made. In doing so, this research connects with other scholars working in areas such as gender and gender relations, the workplace, oral history, as well as urban history and suburbanization.

What emerges is a complex set of responses from men and women to the cultural and social transformations that confronted them. Prior to WW II, the large defense manufacturers examined here were almost exclusively male bastions, sites of masculine identity formation. During the war, massive numbers of women entered the workforce,

upsetting traditional gender roles and threatening the job security of male coworkers. Male employees responded by subjecting women to various forms of harassment. Following the war, managers instituted new rules dictating where women could go within work spaces. In a sense, companies reproduced the dynamic of separate spheres within the workplace.

Other scholars have studied the subject of separate spheres in the workplace during and after WW II. For example, Ruth Milkman's work provides insight into the sexual division of labor during the war.[1] Over the course of WW II, jobs within the automobile and electrical manufacturing industries were segregated into "men's jobs" and "women's jobs". After the war, employers were quick to oust women and rehire men. Milkman insists this was not a predetermined outcome. Indeed, initially reluctant employers were pleased with the work that replacement women workers performed during the war. Furthermore, since women were paid less than men workers, management might have seriously considered hiring them permanently. In fact, as one Women's Bureau pamphlet pointed out, many plants had already been adapted to meet women's needs.[2] Given all of these factors, Milkman asks why management fired female employees. She concludes that the tradition of sex-typing work is not a sufficient explanation.

In the case of both automotive and electrical manufacturing, Milkman concludes that employers were ultimately more concerned with labor relations than anything else.

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[1] Ruth Milkman, "Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II", in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 4th ed., Linda K. Kerber and Sane Sherron De Hart, ed.s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). This article is adapted from chapters 4 and 7 of Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[2] See Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, Special Bulletin No. 18 of the Women's Bureau, "A preview as to women workers in transition from war to peace" (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office: March 1944). One of the sections of this pamphlet is entitled "Plants have been fitted for women's work" (the reasoning being that if this work has already been done, why change it back?).

Unions had demonstrated during the war that they were willing to fight to eliminate the pay differential between men and women. Furthermore, massive numbers of unemployed men could potentially create political instability and possibly strengthen unions at a time when they were already at the height of their influence and power. Or, as Milkman concludes, "management had good reason to believe that a wholesale postwar reorganization of the sexual division of labor … could precipitate widespread resistance from labor."[3]

Given the evidence available from the time, we should not discount the role of identity and perceptions about tradition in this process. To be sure, employers were concerned about dealing with labor. Republic and Sperry were no exceptions in this regard, even after losing their battles to keep unions out. Even though class tensions (or the fear thereof) played a role in this process, the role of tradition (as it relates to identity formation around the axes of gender, race, as well as class) is convincing. The emphasis on returning men to the shop floor had to do with cultural forces at work, along with social customs that stubbornly refused to remain altered. This was a period when identity was not fixed, potentially leading to a great deal of anxiety.

As importantly, the concern with creating separate spheres in the workplace reflected notions about gender identity, which impacted organized labor on Long Island during and after the war. Gender norms affected the efforts of some labor organizers to recruit workers at Republic. Gender norms also created problems for labor leaders at Republic once the union was in place. Throughout the post-war period, male workers at Grumman rejected unions, in part because they feared that a union would trap them in an emasculating bureaucracy.

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[3] Milkman, "Gender at Work," 454.

Appendix

The following is a list of the people who contributed oral histories to the research for this dissertation:

Mary Bloom
Eugene Burnett
John Caruso
Robert Diflo
Ben and Marcia Ezra
Tom Gwynne
Mort Hans
Michael Hlinko
John Lowe
Merven Mandel
Brigid Murphy
Carol Nelson
Kay O'Regan
Gabriel Parrish
Donald Riehl
Gerard Smith
Bob Tallman
Frank Taylor
William Wait