

# WORK STARTED ON CITY HARBOR TURNING BASIN

## \$20,000 Project Will Widen Space For Ships To Turn; Drive Sheet Piling.

"Hot water! Hot water!" shouted burly Peter Becker, superintendent of the organized confusion of a dock construction job in Waukegan's harbor.

Condensed steam spewed from a 150-ton steam hammer suspended from a crane boom about 40 feet in the air over a length of steel sheet piling.

Men below ducked or covered up until the steam line was cleared.

The sharp staccato crack of the hammer on the steel piling bruised it into the mud and sand of Waukegan's harbor in jerky, six-inch drives.

Becker's shout marked the start this week of a \$20,000 construction job to improve Waukegan's harbor. The improvement will widen the turning basin area of the harbor, immediately west of the Waukegan water works.

### SLICE 30 FEET

The Thatcher Construction Co. won the contract to slice a 30 foot wide tract of land off the east side of harbor.

A 361-foot length of the old retaining wall will be removed, along with about 10,000 cubic yards of dirt. After the new sheet piling bulkhead is constructed, the harbor will be dredged to a depth of 18 feet along the new wall.

Becker, aptly called "Spittin' Pete" by his men, considers the job "a piece of cake."

"They've allowed us 40 days to complete the job, but we'll probably finish it before then," he commented.

The husky superintendent is a veteran of 47 months duty in the Pacific theatre with a combat engineer outfit of the army's hard-hitting Seventh division. He was in the army 48 months.

### 84-FOOT "STICK"

He joked affably about Attu, Saipan, Leyte and Okinawa. "It's easy to laugh about now," he said.

Becker pointed out the three cranes used on the bulkhead job.

The big one, on a floating barge, has an 84-foot "stick" to lift the 37-foot long pieces of "Z-bar" piling into place. The lengths of piling are tongued and grooved and must be slipped into place like a photograph in a frame.

When about 10 or 15 of the piling lengths are in place, and checked to make sure they're vertical, the steam hammer is swung into position.

### 22 EMPLOYED

Becker gets his signal to open a steam valve and start the hammer from a workman on the barge. The workman makes a fist and hits himself on the head in a sharp rapid movement. After Becker opens the valve, the steam hammer imitates the signalman.

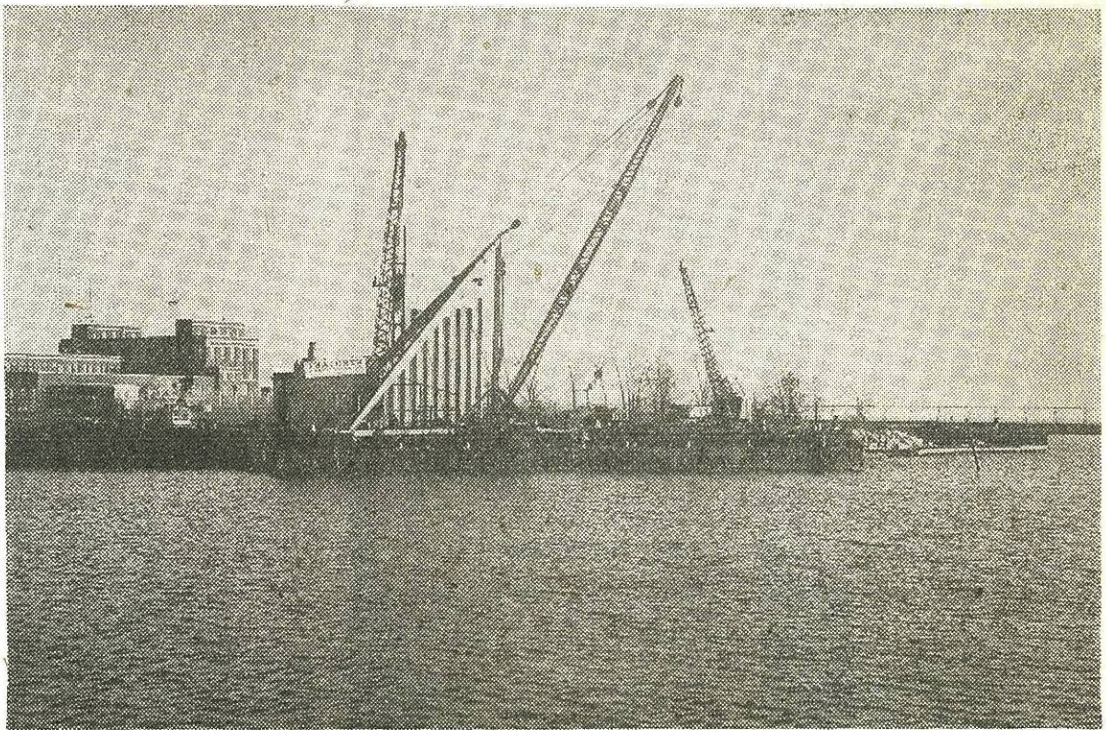
Becker said 22 men are working on the Waukegan job. They're members of the carpenters union and are paid between \$2.45 and \$3.45 an hour.

The second crane is used to hoist the steam hammer in position, and a third one is equipped with a dragline to scoop out dirt behind the old bulkhead.

Harry Thatcher, owner of the company, commented that the work was "hazardous" and required skill and steady nerves.

One of his men, perched high on the sheet piling, made way for the steam hammer. He nonchalantly rode a crane hook to the ground.

Becker, on his way to tend the steam line for the hammer, didn't see him. He only stopped to spit.



Waukegan News-Sun photo

Shown above is a view looking eastward across Waukegan's harbor where the Thatcher Construction Co. is working on improvement 30 feet wide.

federal funds, will make it easier for coal and steel boats to negotiate a 90 degree turn to starboard when entering the Waukegan harbor. Visible in the picture are the booms of cranes in the foreground is mounted.