

Steady Nerves

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Steady nerves have always served me well in overcoming difficulties.

I'm just about convinced that in 1963, I inhaled asbestos dust when aboard the Raffaello, sister ship of the Michelangelo. The Raffaello was then one of the largest liners of the line, having each day a workforce of four thousand on it. While I'm sorry to find myself stricken with asbestosis, I'm in a way happy to have got it when working there at the CRDA – Adriatic Collective Shipyards.

In those days I was sixteen, an ordinary factory worker. I then went on to working within the Naval Dockyard – the Arsenal – with electrical systems of warships.

In November 1970 I started work at the Monfalcone shipyard as a welder; I also started studying at college. By doing so I progressed from employee to charge-hand to deputy storeroom foreman. By working hard, management started to show confidence in me.

In those days, merchant ships when unloading, polluted most of our sites with asbestos dust. Those workers affected are all dead today, as is a high percentage who worked directly with it. Even a friend, who worked in Customs, is constantly on oxygen and simply now withering away.

1992/3 were the years when my bosses really confided in me. One evening the Chief Engineer called me in (I had no idea what was going on) and told me, along with two to three others, to check for asbestos in the storerooms. There was a general storeroom and two smaller ones for the production floor; one workshop linked to submarine production was significantly contaminated with asbestos dust. Everything around had been abandoned and our sampling for asbestos did not bode well for 70 tons of grey and blue material had simply vanished. It seems that over ten days, in 1993, the stuff had been sent to a firm in Strassoldo for disposal; hopefully underground?

And the paperwork went missing.

Between 1999-2000 some older buildings were roofed with asbestos sheeting by a specialized company that also had ties with Chernobyl. People worked in them unprotected from what was above them I pointed out the situation to Site Managers.

I packed up working there in 2002, then despite having aches and pains, worked another four years with [Danieli's](#) of Buttrio.

My disease was diagnosed in December 2001; in March 2002 I had an exploratory operation. Now all I have after three months is a scar, no tumour. This did shake me up for two to three days, but because of being what I am I simply said what *will be* will be.

