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How Rosie Survived the Peacetime Layoff

A s much as the American industrial needs of World War II ushered in revolutionary changes for women's employment prospects, with millions of women filling previously male jobs, the end of war threatened to send those same millions back to the kitchen and the nursery. A 1943 New York Times article asked, "16,000,000 Women: What Will Happen After?" A Women's Home Companion article in the same year answered: "Give Back the Jobs!" Nonetheless, within nine months of the men coming home from overseas, a 1945 article in the same year answered: "Give Back the Jobs!" The men were coming home from overseas, and everyone agreed they had first claim on the dwindling industrial employment line.

Well, not everyone agreed. With the end of the war, opinion surveys showed that as many as two-thirds of wartime women workers wanted to keep working, and not as waitresses, domestics, or unmarried school teachers (the work was denied to married women). As early as 1943, Susan B. Anthony II (a great-niece of the 19th century civil rights champion) asked, "What assurance have the women of America that maximum exertion and everyone agreed they had first claim on the dwindling industrial employment line.

Well, not everyone agreed. With the end of the war, opinion surveys showed that as many as two-thirds of wartime women workers wanted to keep working, and not as waitresses, domestics, or unmarried school teachers (the work was denied to married women). As early as 1943, Susan B. Anthony II (a great-niece of the 19th century civil rights champion) asked, "What assurance have the women of America that maximum exertion of their energies now will give them not only a place in the war today, but a place in the world tomorrow?" Nonetheless, within nine months of VE Day, four million women workers lost their jobs as the female workforce declined from 36 percent of all workers to just 28 percent.

Kay Morrison, who worked in the wartime Kaiser shipyards as a welder (and continues working there today as a docent Rosie at the Park's Visitor Center), recalls wanting "to keep working as a welder after the war because I really loved welding, but the jobs were primarily for veterans, which was only fair." After the war, an employment office offered her work as a waitress. "I said, no, I'm a journeyman welder. Why would I want to work as a waitress?"

Like many laid-off Rosies, Morrison went home and raised two children for the next 10 years before getting a job as an entry-level bookkeeper. Over the next 30 years she held "every conceivable job in banking" before retiring as branch manager at a large Bank of America branch in Oakland.

Rosie Marrian Wynn (another Rosie docent at the Visitor Center) was able to parlay her pipe welding skills into a post-war career at various conceivable jobs in banking before retiring as branch manager at a large Bank of America branch in Oakland.

Rosie Marrian Wynn (another Rosie docent at the Visitor Center) was able to parlay her pipe welding skills into a post-war career at various assembly-type jobs over the subsequent decades, including soldering parts for the Minuteman missile system and the Blackhawk helicopter.

Their experience, and that of millions of other women, was symptomatic of the changes taking place in the post-war economy, which was transforming from a manufacturing base to a service base, with explosive growth in jobs then considered suitable for women: bookkeeping, bank telling, office work, retail, and education. For example, more than 20,000 women joined the ranks of the Tupperware sales force by 1950, by which time the national employment participation rate of married women aged 35 to 44 virtually vanished with victory; she simply transformed herself from a welder.

As historian Doris Weatherford states in American Women and World War II, "Rosie the Riveter did not vanish with victory; she simply transformed herself into the White-collar Worker."
We Can Do It…Today!

in 1916 to preserve America’s natural, was created The National Park Service.

The Rosie the Riveter/ WWII Home Front National Historical Park

1414 Harbour Way South, Richmond, CA 94804
1014 Florida Ave, Richmond, CA 94804

Maritime Child Development Center
Richmond CA 94804 • 510-232-5050

1414 Harbour Way South, Ste. 3000 (Oil House)
(Closed Thanksgiving, December 25th, & New Years Day)

National Park Visitor Center
info@rosietheriveter.org

Development Associate
Rosalyn Sternberg,

Pro Bono Legal Counsel
Conny Ford

Tom Butt
Cathy Durfee,

Vera Rowsey,

Vice President
President

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

5/17, 6/14, 6/21, 6/28 at 2 PM (1 hour)
Served Seating*

6/20 at 1:00 PM (45 minutes)

6, 1944.

clips, and newspaper headlines what women answered?

Learn about the WWII media campaign Women, Get a War Job!

Mondays

Wednesdays

Sundays

What kinds of questions were sailors and civilians asking after ten million pounds

of explosives were destroyed by air attack in 1944?

We are proud to announce that our Richmond Rose’s Girls Summer Camp Program received an Outstanding Public Engagement Award from the Public Lands Alliance this spring! Learn more about Rose’s Girls at rosithe riveter.org/our-work/summer-programs!

We Can Do It!...Again!!

—Tom Leatherman

NON-PROFIT ORG U.S. POSTAGE PAID Permit NO. 1580 Oakland, CA

Rosalyn Sternberg of Contra Costa College will guide a presentation about the extraordinary industrialist who was a loyal friend to the Kaiser shipyards- about life and work during this special year. In March we launched our Every Kid in a Park program, bringing all Americans into the National Park system in a very tangible way. April was a celebration of the centennial and show everyone We Can Do It, again!!

Join author Steve Gilford for a 45 minute presentation about the extraordinary Henry Kaiser: “Build ‘Em By the Mile and Thorns” and shares from their lives and the documentary film “Blossoms and Thorns” and shares from their experiences in a WWII internment camp.

Friday

Raton Meet and Greet!

5/27 at 12:30 PM (45 minutes)

During WWII, American women were asked to sacrifice in support of the troops, and this was involved risks of all the duties. Learn about informing and share a sweet treat invented by wartime cooks.

Saturdays

“Of Lost Conversations”: Ranger Talk by Betty Soskin

5/6, 6/6, 6/25 at 2PM (1 hour)

Ranger Betty Soskin discusses her experience as a young African American woman during WWII. “Limited Seating for this popular program.- Starting 1 hour prior to program and numbers are issued at the front desk. Those without a number cannot be admitted due to fire code regulations.

Blossoms and Thorns

5/16, 5/26, 6/25, 6/26, 7/6, 7/7, 8/6, 8/7, 8/13 at 2 PM (45 minutes)

A docent from the Japanese American Citizens’ League screens the documentary film “Blossoms and Thorns” and shares from their experiences in a WWII internment camp.

Fridays

Rat on Meat and Grain!

5/5, 5/27, 6/10, 6/17, 6/25 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM (2 hours)

Most Fridays, a group of civilians interested in World War II social history, military history, and politics will give a short talk about WWII.

Saturdays

Rosie Meet and Greet!

5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24, 6/6, 6/13, 6/20, 6/27, 7/4 at 10:00 AM (45 minutes)

Meet and greet Rosie the Riveter, the symbol of American women who labored on the Home Front, inspiring civilians asking after ten million pounds of explosives were destroyed by air attack in 1944.

Rosie the Riveter/ WWII Home Front National Historical Park • Summer 2016

Our centennial activities and celebrations are well underway and we are excited to be working so closely with our partners in helping to celebrate the National Park Service during this special year. In March we launched our Every Kid in a Park program, bringing all fourth graders in Richmond to the visitor center and waterfront to learn about and enjoy the amazing history and opportunities in their own backyard. After a day, after, in collaboration with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, we swore in 50 new citizens from 21 countries—connecting those citizens to the amazing legacy of the National Park system in a very tangible way. April was a chance to the Trust to highlight the park at the annual fundraising dinner with Betty Reid Soskin, our 94-year-old park ranger, there to inspire us all. In May the National Park Service will be the lead sponsor for the Bay Area Open Space Conference at the Craywase Pavilion, another chance to highlight of our work at National Park sites around the Bay Area. Plans are well underway for another Rosie Rally in August to demonstrate the “We Can Do It!” attitude that put Richmond on the map— and take the world record back from the folks at Willow Run. This year’s Rosie Rally is helping to raise awareness about the efforts of the Rosies and the contributions of home front workers across the county. We hope you can join us on August 13 (dressed in your polka dot bandana, blue slacks and shirt, red socks and boots) to help us celebrate the centennial and show everyone We Can Do It, again!! —Tom Leatherman