Blossoms and Thorns

T he remarkable arc of social change that began during the war years did not happen spontaneously or without difficulty. That is why Flora Ninomiya, whose family grew roses in their greenhouses. Before WWII, Richmond was a semi-rural place where Japanese immigrants and their American-born Nisei offspring were at the heart of a peaceful and thriving cut-flower trade. But as the need for ships and other war-time production turned Richmond into an industrial boomtown, the city became an epicenter for growing suspicion of Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens.

During the years before and after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066, Flora Ninomiya was sent away and detained at a camp in Granada, Colorado, with her extended family except for her father, who was held in a different camp for 2½ years until he was allowed to rejoin his family. She recalls life in the barracks with no running water, surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers; farms to supplement the government food with fresh fruit and vegetables; groups for sports, art, and crafts.

After four years of being detained, Flora, then 11, and her family returned to Richmond. Fortunate to find their home and business intact, they were able to resume normal life, thanks to assistance from a generous neighbor, Francis Aebi, while they were in the camps. When it had become apparent that relocation was imminent, Flora Ninomiya’s father had a visit to Mr. Aebi, who agreed to take care of their business and also of those two other families during the time they would have to spend in camps. Mr. Aebi then kept the business going enough to pay the property taxes so that the properties remained in their owners’ names.

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December 2019

Events and dates are subject to change. Visit the ROSIE homepage at rosietheriveter.org/calendar.htm for up-to-date event and tour schedules.

Call the Visitor Education Center to center for special programs at 510-232-5050 x18.

SUNDAYS

Tickets Over the Rainbow
12/15, 12/16 @ 10:30 am (1 hour)
Join UC Berkeley Professor of History Emeritus Thomas McKellar for a presentation about how the Great Migration during WWII created the California we know today.

WEDNESDAYS

Games and Toys for Girls and Boys
12/11, 12/18 @ 2:00 pm (1 hour)
Kids need and deserve the thrill of opening presents, whether for birthdays or holidays. Even the war didn’t change that! We’ll open a whole bunch of toys together, all dating back to the war years.

THURSDAYS

Blossoms and Thorns
12/5, 12/12 @ 2:00 pm (1 hour)
A docent from the Japanese American Citizens’ League screens Blossoms and Thorns, a documentary about Richmond’s pre-and post-war community of flower growers and nursery owners, and shares from their experiences in a WWII incarceration camp.

And the Oscar Goes To… Oscar-winning WWII Films Aboard the Red Oak Victory
12/22 @ 2:00 pm (1 hour)
Join author Steve Gilford for a presentation about the extraordinary life of ship builder Henry J. Kaiser, an industrialist who was a loyal friend to (organized) labor.

FRIDAYS

Rosie Meet and Greet
12/13, 12/20, 12/27 @ 10:30 am and 11:30 am (35 minutes)
A group of civilian WWII docents share their stories. Ask the experts about life in the Rosie the Riveter film experience. Please watch the orientation film, Rosie Front/ Rosie Home, at 10:10 am before seeing the Rosie.

Flattening the Home Front
12/13 @ 12:30 pm (30 minutes)
During WWII, Americans were asked to sacrifice in support of the troops, and this was evident daily at the dinner table. Listen to stories about the Federal Government’s rationing program and how it affected families on the Home Front.

SATURDAYS

Henry J. Kaiser: Build ‘em by the Mile and ‘Em all by the Yard
12/12 @ 315 pm (1 hour)
Join author Steve Gilford for a presentation about the extraordinary life of ship builder Henry J. Kaiser, an industrialist who was a loyal friend to (organized) labor.

Disney’s Call of Cthulhu
12/21 @ 2:00 pm (1 hour)
A group of civilian WWII docents share their stories. Ask the experts about life in the Rosie the Riveter film experience. Please watch the orientation film, Rosie Front/ Rosie Home, at 10:10 am before seeing the Rosie.

We Can Do It…Today!

“...all dating back to the war years.”

To learn more about the Japanese imprisonment during WWII, check out these great movies that feature interviews and photos from the people who lived through it. Blossoms and Thorns and And Then They Came for Us. Both films are available at the Visitor Center and the Japanese-American N...