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Marian Wynn

Rosie the Riveter
WWII American Home Front Oral History Project

*This interview series was funded in part by a contract with the
National Park Service, and with the support of individual donors.*

Interview conducted by
Shanna Farrell
in 2015

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Marian Wynn, "Rosie the Riveter WWII American Home Front Oral History Project" conducted by Shanna Farrell in 2015, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2016.



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Interview 1 June 22, 2004

01-00:00:00

Farrell: This is Shanna Farrell with Marian Wynn on Thursday, August 27, 2015. We are at Marian's home in Fairfield, California. Marian, can you start by telling me where and when you were born and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:23

Wynn: I was born in Kasota, Minnesota in 1926, August 19, to Mary and William Parsons, and I was the third in line. We were very, very poor. My dad was working for WPA, it was during the Depression, and he only made \$69 a month. He worked days sometimes in a cemetery, sometimes doing road work. We moved to northern Minnesota when I was six years old, and he got a job doing different odd jobs with my aunt and uncle, they lived there too, and we did help out on the farm. Then we moved up north to Backus, Minnesota, and then Pine River, and I graduated from Pine River High School in 1944.

In 1942, my dad was working for WPA again and making \$69 a month again, and—I think I made a mistake there. He answered a newspaper ad that Minneapolis had in the paper saying that anybody that went to California to work in the shipyards, Kaiser would pay their way out on the train. So my dad came out with two of his friends, and when they got here they couldn't find a place that had three beds, so they got a place with one bed and each one of them got a different shift and slept in the same bed. They did that until they got enough money and each one of them bought a trailer house.

He came home in 1943 and my sister had quit school. She was the second one down, but she had quit school, so he brought her back out here with him and I cried because I wanted to come too. He said, "If you don't graduate, you don't come at all." So I had one more year to go, and I did graduate in 1944. I went to southern Minnesota and got a job bagging granulated rockwool insulation at Carney Rockwool Company, making 53 cents an hour. My girlfriend and I worked two months until we had enough money to come out here. We got a hotel room when we got there, after taking the Greyhound bus down there.

We got a newspaper and we looked for a place to stay, and we had this one woman that wanted a girl to come and stay with her at night because her husband worked nights, and we asked her if we could both stay, and she said if we wanted to sleep in the same bed. So we slept in the same bed for two months, got our money, came home. I came home for my eighteenth birthday with my mom and the eight kids that were still home, and then the next week I came out here and got a job in the shipyard as a pipe-welder, lived with my dad. I made a dollar an hour during the week, \$1.50 on Saturday, \$2.00 an hour on Sunday—tacking handrails on the ship.

We worked in a little area called west storage and they'd bring all the pipes out there to us, and when the pipes were done, my boss would call the ship and tell them to come and get them and bring some more, and when he took them to the ship, they were already assembled, ready to put on the ship.

01-00:04:22

Farrell:

Backing up a little bit, can you tell me a little bit more about your dad as a person and as a father, and then what he did for the WPA?

01-00:04:34

Wynn:

I don't remember the first times he worked, other than I remember he worked at a cemetery in Kasota. Because we'd go down to meet him, he had the horses and a wagon, so we'd run down there and meet him so we could ride home in the wagon. We were maybe five and six years old. But I don't remember what he did before that. But he did work in the lumber a lot, cutting down trees. He had his own saw rig, so he would saw up all the wood the neighbors needed.

01-00:05:14

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about your mother?

01-00:05:18

Wynn:

My mother was a blessing. She had all these kids, she never complained, she never swore. She never went anyplace, just stayed home all the time with the kids. I remember one time she sent my sister and I and a neighbor girl to town, and we had to walk a mile. We were five and six years old. But she was pregnant, and she was wanting some Cracker Jacks. It was 15 cents, 5 cents a box, so we got a box for each one of us, and the neighbor girl had her nickel, so she bought hers, and on the way home we opened them because we wanted to see what kind of a prize we got. So we ate all of our popcorn and we were really wanting to see what my mom got, so we opened her box. And then we started eating hers, and when we got home we had eaten half of the box. And she was standing on the porch waiting for it, and she never said a word. We told her we ate half of it, but she never said a word, she just ate the rest of it. But I felt so guilty ever since then over that.

01-00:06:30

Farrell:

So you're one of eleven children. Can you tell me a little bit about your siblings? Or maybe a memorable holiday?

01-00:06:40

Wynn:

I remember one time, I think it was Christmas. We put our pennies in a dish on the table for Santa Claus. My big brother got up and stole all the money, and when we got up in the morning the dish was empty, but my mother knew that somebody got the money, and it was my older brother, he had taken the seven or eight pennies and put it under his pillow. I remember that. We were so poor we wanted money, I guess, for candy or something.

01-00:07:24

Farrell:

Did you grow up around any of your extended family, your grandparents or your aunts and uncles?

01-00:07:28

Wynn:

Only had two grandparents—my dad's dad was living, and my mother's mother was living, and we were very close to them. My grandpa would come and live with us during the winter sometimes. And my grandma would come and visit a lot. And I had two uncles on my mother's side that we visited a lot, and we had one uncle on my dad's side that we visited a lot. As I grew up, I would go down to Winnebago and stay with my aunt and uncle and get a job doing something. I haven't been home one summer since I was 9 years old.

01-00:08:13

Farrell:

We can pause any time you want. Or if you want to just switch to audio, I can put a cap on this too.

01-00:08:20

Wynn:

No, that's all right, I just get nervous. I do this at work. But I haven't been home one summer since I was nine years old, one summer. I'd get a job working—my first job was when I was nine years old, I got a job herding cows for the neighbor, and I lived with them the whole summer. They lived about two miles from my mom and dad, and they would bring me home to visit my mom and dad and all the kids, or they would come and visit me. And at the end of the summer, they gave me a check, my mom gave me the Montgomery Ward catalogue, and I picked out all my school clothes. That summer I had 10 cents left, so she told me I could get a Shirley Temple cutout doll. I'll never forget that. I had all new clothes. Otherwise I would have had hand-me-downs from my sister.

Sometimes I would work for the neighbors. If they had a new baby in the family, I would go and do their housework and cook. One time I was working for one family and the mother had to go to the hospital, but she had made potato salad and things for me to get ready for her husband the next day, because he had to go to work. So he came home at lunchtime and I had everything ready, and he said, "Did you warm up the potato salad?" And I said, "Oh yeah, I forgot." I was about eleven years old, but I was learning. It's things like that you forget.

01-00:09:57

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about your time in school, if there was a subject that you particularly liked?

01-00:10:06

Wynn:

I know I didn't like history. That's the only thing I didn't like. I loved geography and mathematics and English, but I didn't like history at all.

01-00:10:18

Farrell:

What was it about history that you didn't like?

01-00:10:20

Wynn:

I don't know. I think it was the names of the people and the dates, what they did on certain dates. Just one subject I didn't care about.

01-00:10:31

Farrell:

Were there any teachers that you had that you particularly liked?

01-00:10:35

Wynn:

Oh yeah, I still remember her, Louella Knoph.

01-00:10:38

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about her?

01-00:10:41

Wynn:

I don't remember much about her, except she was so nice. And I knew her brother, I went with him a little while later, when I got older. But I really liked her. She was pretty, and she'd give us a ride home if we didn't have a way to get home. We always had to walk, unless we had somebody that would come and pick us up. She would go right past my house, and if I stayed and helped her do something after school, she'd take me home. I remember that about her.

01-00:11:13

Farrell:

You had mentioned before that you wanted to leave the year before you graduated from high school. Can you tell me a little bit about what that last year was like for you in school, knowing that you wanted to—

01-00:11:26

Wynn:

I knew I wanted to come to California, but my girlfriend and I decided we'd like to join the WAVES, so we signed up—got the papers, and we were going to fill out our papers, and they told us we'd have to wait till we were eighteen, but we could sign up the papers then. So we did. But we had to wait till we were eighteen before we could join. And by then, my dad had come home and I promised him I'd come back out and work with him, live with him. He came home in 1943. By now it is 1944.

01-00:11:52

Farrell:

Can you explain to future listeners what the WAVES are?

01-00:11:58

Wynn:

Oh, the WAVES were the women that were in the Navy. I had some friends that were in the Navy that were older than me, and I just thought they were so pretty in their uniform, I think was what got my girlfriend and I. So we decided we would sign up and join the WAVES when school was out. But by the time school was out, I already had this idea to come out here and work in the shipyard, stay with my dad.

When I went home for my eighteenth birthday with my mom, I was there a week and the military came out and told my mom that my brother had gotten killed in France, and he's buried in Normandy. So it was lucky I was there

that week, otherwise she'd have been there with the little ones all by herself. Then I came out and lived with my dad, because he was out here by himself.

01-00:12:47

Farrell: So your oldest brother—how old were you when joined the services, and what was his name?

01-00:12:47

Wynn: His name was Donald Parsons. He was working in Iowa, and he could've gotten deferred, because if you were doing an important job, you could get deferred. But he said if everybody has to go, I have to go too. I was sixteen. But I had gone down to southern Minnesota with him that year, and he got a job in Iowa, and I got a job working in the cannery. In Winnebago, Minnesota, I live with the city policeman and his wife and took care of their kids until I started at the cannery. Then I stayed because his wife was afraid to stay alone at night while he worked.

I know I went down there one time, that was when I was fifteen, and you had to be sixteen to work in a cannery, so I signed up to work in a cannery. I was working for a cop and his wife. I worked days in the cannery and at night I stayed with his wife with the two little kids. I came home crying one day because they told me I'd lied about my age on my application, and when I came home he was there, and he said, "Did you lie on your application?" I said, "No, I put down my birthdate and they hired me after I turned sixteen on August 9th." So he went down and had them hire me back. I cried all the way to their house. I wanted to work. So I got to work the two weeks in August. I took a Greyhound bus home. Then I went back the next year and worked the entire season—1943.

01-00:14:37

Farrell: Do you remember where the cannery was?

01-00:14:41

Wynn: In Winnebago, Minnesota.

01-00:14:43

Farrell: And what were you doing in the cannery?

01-00:14:44

Wynn: At that time, 1943, we were casing—we worked in the warehouse, my cousin and I worked in the warehouse, and we were putting the cans in the—taking them off the belt and putting them into boxes.

01-00:15:00

Farrell: How long were your work days?

01-00:15:03

Wynn: Eight hours.

01-00:15:03
Farrell: And did you get a break?

01-00:15:05
Wynn: Oh yeah.

01-00:15:08
Farrell: What did the workforce look like? Were there a lot of women, or was it mostly men?

01-00:15:16
Wynn: I remember there was one man that worked where they canned the cream-style corn, because we went by and asked him to go to lunch with us one night. So that's how I remember him. He did go with us. The heavy work was done by men.

01-00:15:37
Farrell: You mentioned that your dad saw the newspaper ad in 1942 for the shipyards, and then went to work. Where were those shipyards and what was he doing?

01-00:15:48
Wynn: In Yard 3, Kaiser Shipyard.

01-00:15:49
Farrell: In California?

01-00:15:51
Wynn: In California. Yard 3.

01-00:15:52
Farrell: So he went there for a period of time, three years, and then came back. Do you remember anything that he talked about, maybe how you got interested in going? Something he said that made you interested?

01-00:16:06
Wynn: I just wanted to go to California, I think, and work in the shipyards and make some money and be with my dad because he was there alone.

01-00:16:14
Farrell: When he went to California, do you remember your mom's reaction to that?

01-00:16:22
Wynn: She was happy, because we had no money. We had eleven kids and my dad was working for WPA, and we didn't have any money. He had a saw rig and he would do wood-cutting jobs on the side. But we didn't have medical insurance or anything, we used all the home remedies. I don't remember exactly what he said. I know he was a hunter and he couldn't wait to get his gun. I have a picture of him sitting on the hood of his car with his rifle, wishing he could go deer hunting.

- 01-00:17:03
Farrell: So then you graduated in 1944, and then mentioned that you took a Greyhound. Did you take the Greyhound out to California?
- 01-00:17:12
Wynn: Yes.
- 01-00:17:13]
Farrell: And were you working in the Kaiser Shipyards?
- 01-00:17:17
Wynn: I did. I worked in Yard 3.
- 01-00:17:19
Farrell: What was it about California that drew you to it?
- 01-00:17:25
Wynn: I had never been out of the state before, and I just thought it would be nice. My dad was out there, and I'd like to go out and live with him. I planned to go back home when he did, but I met my husband, got married, so I stayed here.
- 01-00:17:42
Farrell: You came back for your eighteenth birthday before I went to California.
- 01-00:17:47
Wynn: I was working in southern Minnesota after I graduated, and then I went home from there. I made enough money to come to California. So before I came to California, I went home for my eighteenth birthday with my mom and the eight kids that were still home.
- 01-00:18:07
Farrell: So that was the week that you found out about your brother. Can you tell me a little bit more about that, and I guess what you remember from that period—yeah, I guess from what you remember about that week.
- 01-00:18:27
Wynn: Well, I remember my mom and I had gone to town for some reason, my sister was working in a cafe there. So we just went into town to get some groceries, I suppose, and I remember we just got home, got out of the car and went in the house. We had a little entryway into the house, and just as my mom shut the door, this nice new car drove in with a man and a woman that were in the military, drove in, and I think we knew right away what was wrong. So they came to the door and told us that my brother had gotten killed in June. This was August. I think he got killed on June 28, and it took that long for them to notify us. And he was buried in Normandy. I was thinking how lucky I was to be home with my mom when this came about, and I stayed a week with her. I remember a lot of crying.
- 01-00:19:31
Farrell: How did your father receive the news?

01-00:19:35

Wynn: Oh, my mother sent him a telegram.

01-00:19:37

Farrell: And then after that week, is that when you went to California? Can you tell me a little bit about that Greyhound bus ride and your anticipation of arriving?

01-00:19:51

Wynn: Yeah, there was a man that had come out with my dad, and I was going to leave on a Tuesday night, and he came running up—I was standing in line ready to get on the bus, and he came up saying, “Where are you going?” And I said, “I’m going to California.” And he said, “Not tonight.” And I said, “Yes I am.” Then he pulled me aside and said, “Your dad asked me if you would wait until Thursday and go home with me on the bus, that way I would show you where to go.” He lived in the same trailer park, so he could show me where to go. And it was a good thing, because we got here in the middle of the night and I would’ve been afraid. So that worked out.

01-00:20:33

Farrell: So when you got here, you started reading newspaper ads for employment?

01-00:20:39

Wynn: No, my dad took me to the hiring hall. [Interrupted by phone call]

01-00:20:49

Farrell: So when you arrived here, your dad took you to the shipyard. Can you tell me about applying for—

01-00:20:53

Wynn: I don’t remember. He took me to a hiring hall, but I don’t remember where it was, and they were hiring pipe welders. And he asked me if I’d like to be a pipe welder, and I said I’d like to have a job, I don’t care what it is. So I got a job as a pipe welder. And I went to school for two weeks and I learned to weld, and I loved it.

01-00:21:12

Farrell: Can you tell me about pipe welding school?

01-00:21:15

Wynn: They told us the main thing to learn was, you knew the size of your pipe, you had to know the size of the rod to weld that pipe, and you had to know the heat that it took to heat that particular rod so it wouldn’t burn a hole or stick. If it was too hot, it would burn a hole in the pipe, and if it was too cold, it would make it stick to the pipe. But you don’t let it do that more than once.

01-00:21:44

Farrell: Do you remember what the temperature was?

01-00:21:47

Wynn: No. I don’t know anything about it now. But I did then.

01-00:21:52
Farrell: Were there a lot of people in school with you?

01-00:21:55
Wynn: That I don't remember.

01-00:21:57
Farrell: And then, did you find—when you actually started on the job, did you find that that two-week period was helpful?

01-00:22:04
Wynn: Yeah, I could do it okay.

01-00:22:07
Farrell: So can you tell me a little bit more about what your role was, what you were doing, maybe what your day-to-day looked like on that job?

01-00:22:18
Wynn: Well, they'd bring out the pipes and we had several we had to weld together, but my boss took care of that. He had a helper—they had men that would turn the pipes and get them ready for us, and we'd weld them to their specifications. Then when they took them back to the ship, they were all ready to put in place.

01-00:22:40
Farrell: How many pipes would you weld in a day?

01-00:22:42
Wynn: Oh, I have no idea. We had different sizes. Sometimes we had little ones, sometimes we had big ones. But on a Saturday and Sunday I got double-time for Sunday and time and a half for Saturday, so I worked every weekend I could. But I worked on the ship tacking the handrails.

01-00:23:01
Farrell: Tacking the handrails?

01-00:23:03
Wynn: Tacking the handrails, so when the certified welders came to work on Monday, they were all ready to weld. You just put a little tack around each one to hold it in place, so when the certified welders came in the next day, they would have them all ready, all they had to do was weld them.

01-00:23:22
Farrell: Did you work eight-hour days?

01-00:23:26
Wynn: Eight hours.

01-00:23:27
Farrell: You did that for—

- 01-00:23:33
Wynn: Eleven months.
- 01-00:23:35
Farrell: What were some of the challenges that you had when you were working in the shipyard?
- 01-00:23:47
Wynn: I don't remember any challenges. We just knew what we had to do and we did it.
- 01-00:23:53
Farrell: Were there a lot of other women working with you?
- 01-00:23:54
Wynn: I think there were eleven. I have this picture, and I think there's eleven besides myself.
- 01-00:24:03
Farrell: Do you remember any one of them specifically, or any friendships that you formed?
- 01-00:24:07
Wynn: Oh, I remember all of them.
- 01-00:24:07
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about them?
- 01-00:24:08
Wynn: Maybe because of the picture. There was one that was maybe forty-five, she was old enough to be my mother. And she always knew when I was lonesome or had a problem, and she'd always talk to me. The only time we got to talk is if we were changing rods or waiting for the setup men to put up the new pipes, and then she'd talk to me and get me feeling good again. I remember that. She's the only one I really, really remember.
- 01-00:24:41
Farrell: Were there any unions or—
- 01-00:24:46
Wynn: I belonged to the union. Boilermaker.
- 01-00:24:49
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about the union that you—the Boilermakers union? Why you joined—
- 01-00:24:55
Wynn: We had to join.
- 01-00:24:59
Farrell: Did you attend any meetings?

- 01-00:25:01
Wynn: I don't think so. But I belonged to the Boilermaker union later in life, and I have my card, my withdrawal card from there.
- 01-00:25:14
Farrell: Do you remember being a pipe welder as being a really physically demanding job, or not so much?
- 01-00:25:22
Wynn: I don't remember much about it, but I loved it. I didn't think about quitting or anything, I just loved that job.
- 01-00:25:30
Farrell: What was it about that job that you liked?
- 01-00:25:32
Wynn: Because you could make it look so pretty. They say because a woman was so, being able to crochet and work with her hands, made it a lot easier. It was kind of like a little rhythm, if you made a little rhythm it was like little waves in the weld. When I passed my test, my dad took my test, two pieces of metal welded together, he took that home to show his boss what his daughter was doing in the shipyard.
- 01-00:26:05
Farrell: What was it like living with your dad?
- 01-00:26:10
Wynn: Well, I loved him to death. We had a good time.
- 01-00:26:14
Farrell: And you lived in the trailer with him?
- 01-00:26:14
Wynn: Uh-huh. We had couches in each end that led into a bed at night, and then in the daytime you fold them up and have a divan to sit in. But I cooked. We went grocery shopping together, and I cooked and did the laundry and took care of everything.
- 01-00:26:35
Farrell: Were you working the same schedule?
- 01-00:26:38
Wynn: Same shift, yes. He was electrician lead man, and he worked on drydock. But I never got to see him all day. I'd walk in with him in the morning and I'd walk out at night, but that was the only time I saw him during the day.
- 01-00:26:54
Farrell: And was he also working weekends?

01-00:26:55

Wynn:

No. I don't think he ever worked weekends. But he was older. He was in his late forties.

01-00:27:10

Farrell:

I mean, it doesn't sound like you had a lot of free time, but when you did have free time, what were some of the activities that you liked to do?

01-00:27:19

Wynn:

Oh, I loved to bowl, so I went bowling some. Went to the movies. I didn't know too many people, so I didn't go that much. I had a friend that I got acquainted with while I was there that married one of the guys that my dad came out with. I had known him, he was like family, the whole family was friends. She and I became really good friends till she died. I had seen her the year before she died, had gone back to Minnesota and I saw her. In fact, we went to the casino together, one last try.

01-00:28:04

Farrell:

So you moved to California, from Minnesota and you had never lived out of the state. Can you tell me a little bit—were you living in Richmond?

01-00:28:14

Wynn:

Lived in San Pablo, in a trailer park.

01-00:28:18

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like, or the differences between San Pablo and Minnesota?

01-00:28:25

Wynn:

Oh, the hustle and bustle. We lived out in the country, and the town we lived in was very small. They only had one theater. Here, you could go to any theater, you had a lot of theaters in Richmond at the time. It was a cute little town. It was pretty new, a lot of new stores. I know they had a Penney's store that was pretty new. But I spent most of my time at the dime store.

01-00:28:55

Farrell:

How did you see San Pablo, or even Richmond, change while you were living there?

01-00:29:04

Wynn:

Except for the people, became more and more people all the time, more congested, that was the main thing I remember.

01-00:29:17

Farrell:

What impact did that have on your commute to and from the shipyards?

01-00:29:22

Wynn:

It didn't bother me. My dad drove, and I rode with him.

01-00:29:27

Farrell:

And so you met your husband, who was in the Navy while you were working in the shipyards. Can you tell me about meeting him? And his name and—

01-00:29:33

Wynn:

I met Lloyd Wynn right away, because he had just come to California from New York. He was in the Navy and he transferred from New York to Treasure Island, and his parents were the managers of the trailer park where my dad lived. He had a brother my age that had a girlfriend, and he had a friend, his best friend had a girlfriend, and they'd want him to go with them. But he didn't know anybody, so he'd come and ask me if I would go with him just tonight, because he wanted to go but he didn't have anybody to go with. And I didn't want to go because I was tired, I'd worked all day. But after he begged a while, I would go, just tonight.

So that went on for three months, "just tonight." We decided we would go with them, just go with them. So we went together, I don't know, a couple of months, three or four, and then we got married. And we were married sixty years when he passed away.

01-00:30:40

Farrell:

What were some of those—during that period of time, those dates that you would go on, what would you do?

01-00:30:48

Wynn:

We'd go to the movies, or we'd go bowling once in a while. Or just go for a joyride sometimes. There'd be the six of us, and we'd just go wherever somebody wanted to go.

01-00:31:05

Farrell:

What was his role in the Navy? What was he doing?

01-00:31:07

Wynn:

He was a gunner's mate, third class.

01-00:31:10

Farrell:

And was he deployed at all while you were dating?

01-00:31:14

Wynn:

He had made nine trips before I met him, overseas on a cargo ship. They would take a load of supplies over for the military and they'd bring supplies back that the United States needed. He used to tell about the time they went to Brazil and they brought back a load of bananas, and he ate bananas all the way home. They were always telling about that. Then when he went across the equator, I looked it up. He had a card that said he crossed the equator on December 12 or 14, on a ship that was launched from Yard 3 in, I think, November. So it was a brand-new ship when he was on it.

01-00:32:03

Farrell:

How long was he in the Navy for after you got married?

- 01-00:32:09
Wynn: After I got married? I'd say five months.
- 01-00:32:17
Farrell: And what did he do after he left the Navy?
- 01-00:32:19
Wynn: He went to school on the GI Bill and learned to be an auto mechanic, and he got a job as an auto mechanic.
- 01-00:32:30
Farrell: What was it like—so you had been living with first your family, and then a girlfriend for a couple of months at a private hotel in Minnesota. What was it like—
- 01-00:32:54
Wynn: I was very lonely when I first came out here, because I was used to having ten kids around to play with and talk to. But when I came here, I didn't know anybody, so it was hard, especially when my dad went back home on vacation. I didn't know anybody, and I was there alone. When I went to work, that's when I was lonely and this lady would help me, talk to me.
- 01-00:33:19
Farrell: How often did your dad go back to Minnesota?
- 01-00:33:21
Wynn: Just once a year.
- 01-00:33:22
Farrell: And then how long would he go for?
- 01-00:33:24
Wynn: Two weeks.
- 01-00:33:26
Farrell: Did any of your family members come out here to visit?
- 01-00:33:28
Wynn: No. Nobody had any money. When my dad left Minnesota, we lived in a one-room log house, and we didn't have a bed. My dad and mom had a bed in one corner, and we had twins, and they had a crib. The rest of us threw a blanket on the floor and covered up with another one. When he went home, he had enough money to buy eighty acres of land with trees on it, and he had a saw rig, so with the help of the neighbors and my family, they built a two-story, three-bedroom home, had electricity, and they had a septic tank, so they had a bathroom and you could take, not a shower, but we took a bath when we went home, I did. I was really surprised at the change. But they lived there in comfort after he got home.
- 01-00:34:32
Farrell: How long did that take to build?

01-00:34:33
Wynn: Oh, I have no idea. I wasn't there.

01-00:34:35
Farrell: How often did you get back to Minnesota?

01-00:34:38
Wynn: I went every year.

01-00:34:38
Farrell: Did you go with your dad or at a separate time?

01-00:34:42
Wynn: No, I didn't go home the first year I was here. He went home once while I was here.

01-00:34:50
Farrell: How long did your dad stay in California for?

01-00:34:55
Wynn: He came out in '42, right at the beginning of the war, and went home in March of '45, so three years.

01-00:35:05
Farrell: What did he do when he got back to Minnesota?

01-00:35:08
Wynn: He didn't work steady. He had a saw rig and would saw wood for that need it done

01-00:35:10
Farrell: Oh, he had saved enough money?

01-00:35:13
Wynn: I don't remember what he did. If you did anything, you worked in the woods.

01-00:35:22
Farrell: Can you tell me about some of the—so I mean, a lot of people had sort of—some of the stories I've heard, the shipyards, they had grown up in California so the shipyards were here already. Any of the people that you came across, did you meet anybody that had also traveled to California, and you could you tell me a little bit about them?

01-00:35:44
Wynn: I had two best friends that I met in the shipyard, and I was friends with them until they died. They were painters. I met them when my dad was back home. I had to ride with another guy that worked in the shipyard that lived in the same trailer park that I did, and I knew him very well. But we picked up these two women, painters, and we became instant friends. And we were friends the rest of our time, till they died.

- 01-00:36:16
Farrell: Had they also moved to California?
- 01-00:36:18
Wynn: They came from Louisiana.
- 01-00:36:22
Farrell: Did you find that you could relate to them because they had moved to a new place?
- 01-00:36:28
Wynn: No, we were just friends.
- 01-00:36:32
Farrell: One thing I actually forgot to ask you was about December 7, 1941.
- 01-00:36:59
Wynn: I remember we were at war. And when we went to school the next day, the principal gathered us all together in one big room and told us that we were at war. I don't remember exactly what he said, but it was drastic. After that, the boys were leaving our classroom every day. We'd go in, and one of them would not be there, and we'd say, "Where is so-and-so?" And, "Oh, he enlisted," or "He got drafted." There were no boys to dance with, if you'd go to the dance on Saturday night. The women were dancing together. It was serious.
- Then my brother got—right away he got drafted. And he could've gotten deferred, but he said, If they have to go, I have to go. So he went. He came home for my junior prom in 1943, and I took him as my guest. When he went back to camp, they sent him to France, and he got killed. And that's when we just got the notice. He got killed in June, but we just got the notice in August.
- 01-00:38:09
Farrell: Were there a lot of other families that you knew whose sons were being drafted or—
- 01-00:38:13
Wynn: Oh yeah. A lot of people. We had a barbershop in town, and every time one of the boys got killed, they would post their picture on the wall. It was full of pictures. A lot of our friends.
- 01-00:38:29
Farrell: Given that, so some of the—a lot of things like the popular memories, Rosie the Riveter and a lot of patriotism. Did you feel that?
- 01-00:38:44
Wynn: Oh yeah, everybody did. We were all together. It was kind of like with 911. Everybody was patriotic then, too. Everybody had a flag on their car.

01-00:39:04

Farrell:

Did you feel that as well when you were in the shipyards, that people were working together for the country?

01-00:39:10

Wynn:

It was really busy all the time, just a constant drum of people. Just seemed like everybody was busy. I know we were busy. We didn't ever get to go in the shipyards to see any of the guests, except one. I got to see Una Merkel. I didn't know who she was, but I knew she was a movie star, and we got a chance to go see her for some reason. I don't know why we got to go that day, but we never got to go and see anybody. And I didn't know who she was, but I remembered that name because it was so strange.

01-00:39:51

Farrell:

Were there a lot of actors and actresses that came through?

01-00:39:56

Wynn:

Oh yeah, a lot of them.

01-00:39:56

Farrell:

Who got to go see them?

01-00:39:59

Wynn:

Anybody that had the time, that worked right close by. They always came on your lunch hour. So if you were—like my dad, he could've gone because he worked right there close. But I don't think he ever did.

01-00:40:21

Farrell:

So the ships that you were helping to build, did you ever see them leave port?

01-00:40:26

Wynn:

No. We were in our own little area called west storage all by ourselves. The only people we knew were the people that we worked with, and it was like one big family.

01-00:40:40

Farrell:

Can you tell me a little bit about, well, I guess, what you did after you were a pipe welder?

01-00:40:49

Wynn:

I went to work at the cannery. There was a cannery about two blocks—well, it's two blocks from where I'm working at the visitors center now, Felice and Perelli. I went there and signed up, and they hired me right away because I had experience from when I was sixteen, and I worked there several years.

01-00:41:10

Farrell:

What were you doing when you were there? What kind of cannery was it?

01-00:41:16

Wynn:

The one thing that I really remember, we were canning fruit cocktail, and my job was to put seven half-cherries in every fourth can. And if I missed the half of one, somebody down the line would notice and put one in for me.

01-00:41:37

Farrell:

Did they ever tell you why you had to do that?

01-00:41:39

Wynn:

Well, that was our job. Maybe the next woman had to put so many peaches in, you know, the little cubes of peaches. And the next one probably put the pears in. Each one of us had our own fruit to put in a can of fruit cocktail. It was funny, because you had to remember—I remembered seven half-cherries in every fourth can. You got where you could see seven and you just grab them and put them in your can. But if there were only six, you'd grab the six and you wouldn't have time to put the seventh one in, but maybe the next girl noticed it and she'd put one in.

01-00:42:18

Farrell:

Were all the different types of fruit laid out in front of you?

01-00:42:20

Wynn:

It was coming on a conveyor belt.

01-00:42:23

Farrell:

Right, but when you had to grab the cherries, they were just right there next to you?

01-00:42:25

Wynn:

Uh-huh. They were going by on a conveyor belt.

01-00:42:32

Farrell:

And so you worked there for about three years?

01-00:42:35

Wynn:

Yeah, three or four. Just in the summertime. And I had a baby in the meantime. Then I went to work in Heinz cannery, and I worked in Del Monte in Emeryville. I worked in several places. I worked in Dromedary Cake Mix, it was on Fourth and Cutting. Then I got a job at California Ink and I worked there about three years. Then Hubbard and Coin in Emeryville for six months. Then I retired at Systron Donner in Concord, I worked there eight years and retired. We were making the guidance system for the Minuteman missile and the Blackhawk helicopter. And I have a little Minuteman on my NPS vest.

01-00:43:33

Farrell:

What do you remember about the end of the war?

01-00:43:38

Wynn:

Oh, I remember that very well.

01-00:43:39

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

01-00:43:40

Wynn: I was working at the cannery, because they were getting rid of people at the shipyards, and I was working at the cannery, and when the war was over, everything stopped and the bells were all ringing and the cars were honking their horns, and everybody was shouting and carrying on. And I couldn't wait to get home and call my husband and tell him. He was in the hospital in Oak Knoll, and I couldn't wait to call him and tell him the war was over. And he knew it before I did. Of course, he was in the hospital. But when I got through to him, I couldn't hear him for all the noise in the background, so I knew he already knew it. Because everything—there was so much noise. People shouting and bells and everything. I can remember that very well. I was so happy because he was going to get to come home as soon as he got over his surgery.

01-00:44:36

Farrell: I was about to ask, why was he in the hospital?

01-00:44:40

Wynn: Oh, when he was a child, he had a dynamite cap that blew up in his hand, and it injured his hand, but it wasn't so bad that he couldn't go in the Navy, because they were taking a lot of people if they weren't that bad. So as time went on over the three years, his hand became disabled. The ligament were chinking and tight, and he was ready to go over for the tenth time, and they said he couldn't go in that shape, because the war was winding down and they were getting choosy. So they put him in the hospital and did the surgery, and he was recuperating when the war was over. So he had to stay until they discharged him in October 1945.

01-00:45:22

Farrell: How did you feel when he didn't have to go back?

01-00:45:27

Wynn: Happy. I wasn't married to him while he had to go. He did his nine trips before I married him.

01-00:45:35

Farrell: Right, so then you—you were married at this point, when he was in the hospital?

01-00:45:39

Wynn: Yes.

01-00:45:40

Farrell: Okay, so I was thinking he'd have to leave for the tenth time, but you hadn't experienced—

01-00:45:45

Wynn: Oh, I didn't like that. I was kind of happy he went to the hospital.

01-00:45:50

Farrell: And at this point, had you had children?

01-00:45:52

Wynn: I was pregnant.

01-00:45:54

Farrell: Can you tell me about—so did you leave the shipyard because they were getting rid of people—they were kind of lessening the workforce? Or did you choose to leave?

01-00:46:06

Wynn: When the war was winding down, we didn't need any more ships, so we were no longer working at the west storage, we were working on the ships. So my friend and I were welding a seam in the hold on one side of the ship, and the two riveters were on the other side in the same hold, and that was so noisy. We couldn't talk, we couldn't hear anything. So my friend, Ann, put her hands up to her mouth and shouted, "I'm going home at noon." And I put my hands up and said, "I am too." And our boss was standing in the door, and he came over and said, "You know what'll happen if you do?" And we said we didn't care because we couldn't stand that noise another four hours. So we went home. Well, my friend was experienced, she'd been there for a while, and she knew the job would be over pretty soon. Soon as the welding was done, we'd be through with that job.

So I went back on Monday. This happened on a Friday. So I went back on Monday, and he said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "I came back to finish my job." And he said, "You don't have a job. Remember, you went home Friday." And I said, "Oh, okay." I just got married not long before that, and I was happy to be home. But I went by the cannery and they hired me, so I worked there.

01-00:47:32

Farrell: On that Monday you went by the cannery?

01-00:47:35

Wynn: Probably the next day.

01-00:47:38

Farrell: So that actually brings up a good point with workplace safety. They didn't give you any protective earwear?

01-00:47:46

Wynn: Oh, no.

01-00:47:46

Farrell: And the unions didn't step in and try to help with that at all?

01-00:47:50

Wynn:

I don't know anything about the union, but I know I didn't have any earplugs. It was terrible. If you want to hear a riveter, we have one at the visitors center and you can go down there and play that for five minutes and it drive you crazy. But stand that for four hours. It was terrible. So I didn't really care that I quit, and I didn't care that I got laid off. He said I quit, but I feel like I got laid off. It didn't matter, I had another job.

01-00:48:25

Farrell:

Were there any accidents that you saw while you were working?

01-00:48:29

Wynn:

I didn't see any, but I had some slag get in my eye and I had to go to the hospital one time.

01-00:48:36

Farrell:

How did that happen?

01-00:48:37

Wynn:

I was chipping the slag off from my weld, and it went up under my goggle into my eye, and it stayed in the corner of my eye. So they took me to the hospital and had them take it out and put some ointment in, and sent me back to work.

01-00:48:51

Farrell:

Same day?

01-00:48:52

Wynn:

Same day.

01-00:48:53

Farrell:

How long did it take you to recover from that?

01-00:48:54

Wynn:

Oh, right away. It was just a minor burn. But it hurt awful.

01-00:49:05

Farrell:

Do you remember any other—hearing about any other accidents that had happened?

01-00:49:13

Wynn:

No. I'm sure they happened, but in our little area we didn't hear anything except our little area.

01-00:49:20

Farrell:

Do you remember Port Chicago, when that happened?

01-00:49:24

Wynn:

I was working on my job in Minnesota to make money to come out here on, and we heard about it, but we didn't know where it was, because we didn't know where Port Chicago was. So I didn't know what happened. They just

said it was in California. I didn't know what ship my dad was working on, and we were quite concerned that maybe it was the ship he was on, but we didn't have telephones, so we just had to wait until we got a letter from him. We didn't know anything about Port Chicago.

01-00:49:57

Farrell:

Do you remember when you came out here learning that it had happened in Port Chicago?

01-00:50:02

Wynn:

Oh, we found out about it before I came out. My dad had written to me, to us and told us.

01-00:50:10

Farrell:

That didn't change your feeling about moving out here at all?

01-00:50:12

Wynn:

Oh, no. I never even thought about it. I'm coming to California. My dad was here, I wanted to come out and live with him.

01-00:50:22

Farrell:

When you were working at the cannery, either when you were sixteen or after you left the shipyards, do you remember any workplace—I mean, was it a pretty safe environment, or do you remember any accidents?

01-00:50:31

Wynn:

I thought it was very safe.

01-00:50:36

Farrell:

Did it feel safer than working in the shipyards?

01-00:50:39

Wynn:

I didn't feel like it was dangerous in the shipyard. We didn't have any problems, other than the slag that got in my eye.

01-00:50:50

Farrell:

You had described when the war had ended. Can you tell me about how things changed after it ended?

01-00:51:01

Wynn:

Well, my husband was home. My father-in-law bought us a trailer house, but we had to supply it, so we both had to work to make ends meet. But my husband had gotten a job working on cars, so he had a job in a garage. So we didn't worry, because things were pretty reasonable. We didn't have a car, but I'd saved fourteen war bonds while I was working, so I sent them all home to my mom to keep for me, so I wrote and told her to send me some of them and we bought a car. We probably bought a few other things with it too, I don't know.

- 01-00:51:43
Farrell: Did you save up to buy the work bonds, or can you tell me a little bit about the process of buying those?
- 01-00:51:47
Wynn: You could donate so much out of your check, and after you got so many, you got a war bond. I think they were \$18.50 a war bond, and then when they reached time for them to cash them in, they'd be worth \$25. But those that I bought my car with didn't reach retirement age.
- 01-00:52:17
Farrell: How did you see the community, either Richmond or San Pablo, change after the war? Maybe people leaving, or—
- 01-00:52:26
Wynn: Oh, a lot of people left, but a lot of people stayed, too.
- 01-00:52:31
Farrell: And were there jobs for those people? What did people do for work?
- 01-00:52:35
Wynn: I worked. I assume a lot of them, if you wanted to work, there was a job for you. Maybe not what you wanted to do.
- 01-00:52:40
Farrell: Did you see a lot of—
- 01-00:52:42
Wynn: I didn't have any trouble finding a job.
- 01-00:52:45
Farrell: One thing I'm wondering, one thing I've heard and read is that a lot of women stopped working after the war.
- 01-00:52:54
Wynn: Oh, a lot of them did.
- 01-00:52:57
Farrell: Partly because men were coming back, so there weren't as many jobs, partly because they were starting families.
- 01-00:53:01
Wynn: I have a friend that I volunteer with, and she had gotten married and she wanted to raise a family.
- 01-00:53:08
Farrell: So it was a choice.
- 01-00:53:09
Wynn: So she stayed home and raised her family. I had a baby, but I still worked. I didn't work for three years, I think, steady. I worked part time. But my husband was working steady.

01-00:53:27

Farrell: So you don't remember there being less jobs available.

01-00:53:29

Wynn: I'm sure there were less jobs, because my husband had a hard time finding a job, but once he got it, he kept it. He went to school to learn a new trade.

01-00:53:35

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about how he had a hard time, and maybe his decision to go to school?

01-00:53:41

Wynn: Because of his hand. He had one finger removed and part of another one. So there were jobs that he couldn't do, because he only had one hand. But it helped him with the cars, because he could get his one hand up in the little places that other people couldn't, to put a nut on a bolt or something like that. They'd call him to come and do this.

01-00:54:08

Farrell: And how long was in that job for?

01-00:54:09

Wynn: Oh, for years. Then he got a job as, they called him a grease monkey, I guess. He really cleaned out the tanks on the big trucks that would go out. He worked nights for a long time, I think eight years, cleaning out the tanks. Then he got into the millwright union and retired from that.

01-00:54:35

Farrell: Did you, after the war ended, experience a change—we talked about people were very patriotic. Did you see a decline in that after the war ended, or just people weren't talking about it as much?

01-00:54:46

Wynn: We didn't talk about it. I didn't even show my picture to anybody, because it was just a job. So now I'm working in the cannery, so it's another job. But I never talked about that either. You just went on to another job, whatever was available. But then when they started talking about making a park, I went down and joined. When they dedicated the park, I was there. That was in 1996. Then my husband got sick and I stayed home for five years with him, then after he passed away I went back down there and started to volunteer for the Park Service in 2006.

01-00:55:29

Farrell: I definitely want to talk about that. I have one more question about the end of the war. One of the big things that came out of World War II was plastics. Can you remember any innovations or new technology that came after World War II, that maybe made life easier?

01-00:55:51

Wynn: Not offhand. If I thought about it for a while.

01-00:55:57

Farrell:

So when they were talking about building—do you remember when they were talking about building the park?

01-00:56:05

Wynn:

Yes, I was there when they were talking about getting the park. That's when we gave our name and got in a little tent and told our story and everything, but I don't know whatever came of all of that, I never saw anything about it.

01-00:56:23

Farrell:

Oh, so when they were starting to talk about the park, they had sort of a come and share your story?

01-00:56:31

Wynn:

When they dedicated the park.

01-00:56:33

Farrell:

And did you meet a lot of other people that were working in the shipyards then?

01-00:56:36

Wynn:

I met a lot of people who had worked in the shipyards, but none that I knew. A lot of my friends went back home, except those two painters, they stayed out here. There was another woman that I kept in contact with Ann, the one that was on the ship. She and I—I got laid off but she didn't, because she didn't go back. She was off a week, and then she went back to work and it was another job. But I kept in contact with her for quite a while, till I started working pretty steady, and then I didn't. But we didn't have a phone, we couldn't afford a phone, so we'd go to the pay phone. I'd get tired of going down there standing at the corner, waiting, because other people would be—you had to form a line, and when it came your time, you didn't want to stay on there very long because somebody else was waiting. I know when I was waiting for a call from my husband when he was in the hospital, there was another girl Emily there, and we'd wonder which one of us was going to get the first phone call. But then we wouldn't talk very long, because we knew the other one was waiting.

01-00:57:45

Farrell:

And you stayed in contact with her?

01-00:57:47

Wynn:

I did, for years, and now I don't know where she is.

01-00:57:52

Farrell:

Did she live in Richmond?

01-00:57:55

Wynn:

I don't know if she lived in Richmond or El Sobrante. She lived in the area. She worked in a restaurant and I used to go and eat there just to talk to her.

01-00:58:06

Farrell: So when the park—can you tell me about the park ceremony in 1996, what you remember from that?

01-00:58:14

Wynn: My husband and my daughter and I went, and then they called all the Rosies up, and we're in the picture. They had a little speech. And I was proud of the picture, because my husband's in there, my daughter too, in the background.

01-00:58:35

Farrell: Had you met any of the other Rosies at that point?

01-00:58:37

Wynn: No. But I remember Marian Sousa and her two sisters, because they always had a red scarf with the white polka dots in it. So I remembered the three of them. I always remembered them. I didn't know them, but I remembered them. Now I volunteer with Marian and we are good friends.

01-00:58:55

Farrell: Do you remember, I guess, how many people attended or sort of the general feeling of the crowd?

01-00:59:06

Wynn: There was a lot of them. Quite a few.

01-00:59:10

Farrell: And then can you tell me about your decision to start volunteering as a Rosie with the National Park Service?

01-00:59:16

Wynn: Since I'd been with them so long before my husband got sick, then I was off for five years, because I didn't want to leave him, so my daughter was working for the city in the same building that the Park Service was in. She asked my boss if she could buy one of the jackets that the volunteers wear for me, "I can't sell you one, but I can give you one if you volunteer." And she said, "I can't volunteer because I'm working, but my mother could volunteer, then she can get a jacket." So she called me and said, "Would you like to start volunteering for the National Park Service?" And I said yes, because my husband was gone and I was alone. So that's when I started. That was in 2006.

01-1:00:23

Farrell: And what were you doing those early days of volunteering?

01-1:00:27

Wynn: Oh, we were doing a lot different than we are now, because we were in a little office there, where the temporary City Hall was. It's close to where we are now. We did a lot of things for the office, mostly. We'd send out letters, we'd address the letters and we'd sign whatever had to be signed. Different projects that they had going. We made flags for the different signals on the ships and

boats, nautical signs. We would go on trips sometimes, go to the schools and volunteer to entertain the school kids.

01-1:01:26

Farrell: What has been the reaction from the school kids when you tell your story?

01-1:01:30

Wynn: They're so cute. We had a group one time, there were three of us Rosies, and two of them were gray-haired, one on each side of me, and they were fourth graders, and the teacher had given them each a question to ask. So this little boy was looking at me, he kept looking at me. And she asked if anybody had another question, and he said, "I do." So she said, "Okay, go and ask your question." So he said, "All of you worked in the shipyard, but they have white hair and you have brown. How come?" And the teacher said, "Oh, no, you can't ask personal questions." And I said, "If that's what's on his mind, I'll answer him." So everybody was laughing, because who would think a fourth grader would be asking a question like that. But that was what was on his mind. And I said, "My hair is as gray as theirs, but a little lady came by last night with a bottle of color and I told her to put it on my hair." So that was my answer to his question. Mine was colored.

01-1:02:45

Farrell: So now, when you're there on Fridays, can you, just for future listeners, can you talk a little bit about what you do on Fridays?

01-1:02:57

Wynn: We have a poster that has our picture of when we went to work in the shipyards. Well, mine is when I graduated from high school. And then we have other pictures pertaining to World War II, like my brother, when he got killed, I have a picture of him and I when we went to my junior prom. And when my husband and I were going together. And we tell the story of what we did, from that poster we point to different articles on the poster and tell them what we did during the war and how much money we made and our life, what we did. That's mostly what we talk about.

01-1:03:39

Farrell: Can you tell me about some of the other Rosies that you volunteer with?

01-1:03:44

Wynn: I volunteer with five others. One of them works Saturday, but she's still a member of our group. We all work together. There's five of us that work every Friday, but it's getting where one of them only volunteers—she's 95, and she only works every other Friday now. And one of them has a problem with her back and her hip, and she's in a wheelchair. So she hasn't come back to work steady yet, but we're hoping she will soon. But she's 95 too.

01-1:04:21

Farrell: So the Rosie the Riveter convention happened a few months ago. Can you tell me about what that was like for you to be part of?

01-1:04:27

Wynn:

Oh, fun. We joined them, so we're part of them now. Yeah, we had three days with them. We had three dinners, and just mostly went down there to visit with them.

01-1:04:41

Farrell:

Did you meet any women that you could relate to as far as their stories?

01-1:04:48

Wynn:

No, only the one from, I think she's from Long Beach, Eleanor Otto. She was there. She had just retired, at 95. But she's really a spunky little girl. We had a lot of fun with her. But we had met her before. And she was at the Rosie rally too. But she stuck out in my mind more than any of them.

01-1:05:19

Farrell:

What has it meant to you to volunteer with the National Park Service and with the other Rosies?

01-1:05:24

Wynn:

Oh, that's my life. Otherwise I'd be here by myself. And now we're talking at churches and different places want us to come and tell our story with our poster. And now we have an invitation to go to a veterans meeting and meet the veterans. It's just getting bigger and bigger all the time. We enjoy it. We're having meetings with Pearl Harbor survivors now. We've been to their breakfast once, and we meet them in the parade. We're in a parade now in Concord and Walnut Creek. We'll be in the one this year in Walnut Creek. I think they call it the Walnut Festival. And we were in the Concord one too.

01-1:06:18

Farrell:

When you tell your story to crowds, what are some of the things that you say or the things that you want people to know?

01-1:06:27

Wynn:

Pretty much what I've been telling you, about how poor we were. I remember one time my dad gave my sister and I each a dime, and he wanted to know if we could get a pair of anklets at school during lunch hour. We went to every store in Backus, Minnesota, and we found a pair for 7 cents, and we had three pennies for candy. That meant a lot to us. We never had candy. And I'll never forget it, because we were so poor.

01-1:07:02

Farrell:

Are there things that you talk about what it was like to be working in the shipyards or—

01-1:07:08

Wynn:

Yeah, we talk about that. We talk about getting married and having our kids, and what we did, and the economy. Like driving 35 miles an hour, that was the speed limit, because we had to save the rubber. We couldn't buy tires, so we had to save the tires by driving slow. And gas was rationed. You might want to go somewhere, but you didn't have the gas. You had the money then,

but you didn't have the gas. I remember one time my girlfriend and I wanted—this was before I came out here. We didn't have the coupon to buy the gas for the car, so my mom said if I wanted to put a gallon of the white gas in the car, we could go to the movie, and we went out in the corn field because it was kind of illegal to put that in there, but we broke the law one time. But it was fun. We got to go somewhere.

My mom was—you know, we didn't have any money to go anyplace, and she felt sorry for us, because we were grownups, we were in eleventh, twelfth grade, and we didn't have the money or gas. And we lived three miles out of town, so she thought, Well, give her some of the gas for the stove, then she can go to town. So we broke the law.

01-1:09:10
Farrell:

What were some of the biggest lessons or things that you took with you from the war years? Working in the shipyards, or moving from your family, some of the biggest lessons or things that stayed with you.

01-1:09:31
Wynn:

I don't remember anything important. It just was life. Like I say, we didn't even think anything about working in the shipyard as being what it is now. I would've never thought I was going to get to go to the White House and meet the president and the vice president. Somebody called me on the radio and asked me, "What was your first thought when you were invited by the vice president to come to the White House?" And I said, "All I could think about was, this poor little girl from the Depression that only had two dresses to wear to school, and now I'm going to the White House. It's unbelievable." You can see what can happen if you just work at it. But we were fortunate that we got to go.

01-1:10:11
Farrell:

Actually, can you tell me a little bit more about that experience, going to the White House?

01-1:10:17
Wynn:

Oh, it was like heaven. So unbelievable that we forgot a lot of things that we did until we saw the pictures, because we were there eight days, and we were busy all the time. We went different places. We had a three-hour tour of the White House and a four-hour tour of the Pentagon, and we went to the World War II Memorial, that's where my brother picture, I thought, was going to be there—not the picture, but the seal, but I couldn't find it. Probably didn't know where to go. And then every night at the hotel, we had a happy hour from six till seven, and we even got acquainted with a lot of the hotel guests, because they would like to hear our story. We all had a red and white bandanna on, around our neck, so they'd come up and want to know what that was for, so we would tell them that we were Rosie the Riveter. So they'd come and join us sometimes. We got acquainted with a lot of them.

- 01-1:11:26
Farrell: And you met the president.
- 01-1:11:29
Wynn: We met the president.
- 01-1:11:28
Farrell: And the vice president.
- 01-1:11:30
Wynn: And the vice president.
- 01-1:11:31
Farrell: What was it like meeting both of them?
- 01-1:11:32
Wynn: Oh, I couldn't believe it. We had our picture made with the president, and he's standing right beside me, and I don't remember getting that picture made. Still don't remember getting that picture made. We were in a different—it was a different feeling. I can't explain it. It was so unreal. We had breakfast with the vice president at his home, that was nice.
- 01-1:11:59
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit more about that breakfast?
- 01-1:12:01
Wynn: I remember he talked about his family getting killed in the car accident, and he was so good to all of us. And when one of the aides came up and said—he talked for an hour, I mean we had breakfast with him for an hour, and when one of the aides came up, said, "You have five minutes to meet the president," he just stood up and said, "You have the run of the house. Take pictures, do whatever you want to do, and when you get through inside, the aides will take you outside and show you around." It was nice. We were there quite a while.
- 01-1:12:39
Farrell: What has that meant to you, that people are—you know, you didn't think much of it, this was just life for you. This was during the war, you did what you had to do and—
- 01-1:12:50
Wynn: I had a job, and I was able to buy things I couldn't buy before, and I got married, and I had a baby.
- 01-1:12:56
Farrell: Yeah, so you were living your life and—
- 01-1:12:57
Wynn: It was just like normal.

01-1:12:58]

Farrell:

—and now people are really interested in your story, and people are—you're going to the White House and the radio is calling you and you're going to talk to schools and meet other veterans. What's that been like for you?

01-1:13:09

Wynn:

Well, it's because we know, we hear a lot of rumors that are not really true, and we've been there, we didn't see a lot of that. It happened before I came, but I didn't see it after I came, so they conquered a lot of that before I came.

01-1:13:29

Farrell:

What were some of those rumors?

01-1:13:30

Wynn:

Well, it wasn't a rumor that the men didn't really want the women to work, because they wanted to be the man of the house. So I know of one couple that did get a divorce, the husband left because he didn't want his wife doing the same job, making the same money he was. He couldn't tolerate it. And I know of a lot of cases like that.

01-1:14:16

Farrell:

What were some of the other things that you were hearing that you didn't think were true, or some of the other rumors?

01-1:14:22

Wynn:

Well, they keep asking me, "Did the men mistreat you? We heard that the men mistreated the women in the shipyards." I never was mistreated by anybody. I was more looked upon because I was a child. I was eighteen years old, that was considered just out of high school. I was just fresh out of the home, you know. So they kind of looked after me more than trying to cause problems. So that wasn't true.

01-1:14:56

Farrell:

And are there any other—some of the things that you said that they, before you started working with them, that they got asked a lot. Do you know what some of those other things are? Other rumors that the other Rosies were dealing with?

01-1:15:13

Wynn:

I don't really remember a lot of them. There's a lot of rumors out there. I mean, I know when I answer them that it's something that didn't really happen, but I don't remember what they are.

01-1:15:27

Farrell:

What are the things that you do want people to know about your experience that you—

01-1:15:32

Wynn:

I just feel like, if you want to do it, you can do it. I knew nothing about welding, but I wanted to do it and I learned, and I can do it. I could to it now,

if I had to. So I've asked people—they'll say, "Oh, I couldn't do that." And I'll say, "Did you ever try?" "No." "Well, try it before you say you can't do it. You can probably do it."

01-1:16:05

Farrell: Well, is there anything else that you want to add or want to say?

01-1:16:14

Wynn: I can't think of anything.

01-1:16:16

Farrell: Well, thank you very much.

01-1:16:17

Wynn: I couldn't have thought of all of that if you hadn't helped me.

[End of Interview]