The Baltimore Rosies: Disc Two, Session 3

The Real Rosie The Riveter Project

Interview 5

Interview Conducted by
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For The
Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
Elmer Holmes Bobst Library
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De Mare: Just to start us off and to get back into the energy of that time, do you... do... Do you each have kind of a... a... a favorite anecdote or story about your experience working that you want to share with us? Just a... a funny story, a difficult story. Just, if you think about that time, you know, what is the... is there one thing that pops into mind that you can tell us?

Stemler: One thing that I could tell you about is the fact that I was working at Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, and my boss got a job down at... at Glen L. Martins. And, uh, he said, “Rita, you should really come down here. You really would make a lot more money.” And true to fashion, I did, because I was making twenty-five dollars at Liberty Mutual, and when I came to Glen L. Martins, I was making one dollar an hour. And... but I had to work fifty-six hours, so that meant that I got time and a half after forty hours. So my first pay was approximately seventy-five dollars. And I felt like I was really in the riches.
De Mare: I bet. I bet. And what exactly did you do for Martins? Just real quickly.

Stemler: I was the secretary to the Director of Engineering Personnel.

De Mare: Ok. Terrific.

Stemler: And we had some very interesting people in that division. We even had men from Turkey who were engineers that were working there.

De Mare: Wow. Do you have a story you want to share with us?

00:01:34:20-----------------------------------------------

Arnold: I can’t think of any, um, right off. If I do I can get back to it.

De Mare: Yeah, yeah, oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Mary, do you have...
Arnold: I... I know that I did, uh... I came to work at Glen L. Martin but prior to that I had... I was living up in Ga... uh, rai... was, um... I had... went to high... attended high school up in Garrick County, which is the extreme Western part of the state. And, um, I came to Baltimore and I boarded with an aunt and uncle. And they had nine children, but all of the sons were gradually going into the service. And they asked if I would like to stay with them. I had one cousin who, um, well, when I came, bb... she de... decided she was gonna drop out of school. She... she did not like school.

But the two of us found a job, uh, delivering telegrams with Postal Telegraph. The pay was outstanding; twelve-fifty a week. We rode a streetcar to work, we dro... we rode the streetcar to get home, but what we did with that twelve-fifty a week was outstanding. And we paid... we paid her mother, uh, a couple dollars for our board. It started off with two dollars, maybe, then it went up a little bit more. But we would go shopping and we found the most beautiful clothing up in downtown Baltimore. And at that time they had a store called ‘The Cotton Shop’, and we just found some lovely dresses in there, priced at about a dollar and a half apiece, and we were just so proud of the fact that we were buying our own clothes at that time.
De Mare:  I can imagine.  I can imagine.  Mary, do you have a little, uh, story to tell us to...

Nichols:  Well, I guess one of the things I... I especially remember was that I... well, I was an engineering draftsman and we would... at one point we worked in a building, uh, near Greenmount and, uh, Preston Street on the fifth floor. And on the sixth floor there was a factory that made uniforms for the men in uniform. But they also made cl... other clothes. So, I had never had a suit, so I went up there and I got fitted and I bought two suits. And I got fi... you know, that they fitted me and everything else. And... and I... I bought a, uh, a form for a hat. And even had... covered a hat to match. So I had a three-piece wool... two three-piece wool suits with a hat... with hats to match. And I just loved those suits.

De Mare:  That’s wonderful. Can you talk a little bit about- because you all mentioned it in the first story- about what it was like as young women... Is... is the door open or is it just that we hear more of the... of the vent? It’s...
it’s closed?  Okay.  I just was wondering because the fan is louder than it was before.

Um, can you talk a little bit about, you know, young women coming out of, you know, the end of the Depression and what it was like to be earning your own money. And how that– you think– changed your life from that point on. Let me sit back, cause…

00:05:03:24-----------------------------------------------

Arnold:  I think that was really a part of the growing up period when we realized... Now, when I finished high school I was seventeen. Uh, most of the people were eighteen years of age, but I had skipped a year in school be... I attended elementary school. I lived in the Baltimore area rec... uh, originally. I was born in Baltimore, and my parents bought a home out in Baltimore County, and the Depression years came along.

My father worked for the B & O Railroad, and, uh, the people working in the... he worked in the shop. He kept the big engines, uh, in repair, and, uh, they were among the first group, because of course people were not traveling at that time, during the Depression years. People didn’t have the money to travel. So they were the first to be- they
called it ‘furlough’—they were, uh, asked to leave and tt... and they would be called back to work. But that’s when my parents had to sell their home, and we moved up into the mountain areas. It’s a beautiful, beautiful area of... of Maryland.

But, um, of course not having money to spend, I think it really... and I stayed home for a year, because I thought at eighteen I should be able to accomplish something more job-wise. And, uh, I... I... that’s when I came... decided to come to Baltimore, and, uh, seek some kind of work, re... regardless. I was disappointed that I couldn’t attend college or could not attend nursing school— that I had a great desire to do through the years of growing up. However, I then decided that if I really made enough money I would save the money and I would accomplish whatever I set out to do. So I started, uh, with this job with this Postal Telegraph, which was such an outstanding job, and uh, I had a couple menial jobs after that.

But then I finally decided—when I heard about the Glen L. Martin Company— I decided to... I tt... I attended the vocational school where they taught us we all had to have our own toolbox, and the little, uh, set of small socket wrenches. I think there was a screwdriver, a small hammer involved. Uh, that was probably the extent of... of... I still
had the toolbox and the socket wrenches when I sold my home recently, six years ago, and moved. I have no idea what happened to the toolbox. I wish it was... I could locate it at this point.

De Mare: Yeah. Yeah. So it...

Arnold: But, uh...

De Mare: ...so it was... It was really a part of growing up for you.

Arnold: Yes. Yes.

De Mare: Yeah.

Arnold: You learn to, uh, travel around the city and how to... to, uh, handle your own funds. How to buy your own clothing. And you had to realize, too, that people could not take care of you without your paying for your own keeps.

00:08:33:28-------------------------------------------
De Mare: Yeah. Now, did you wanna say... add something, Mary? Did you wanna add something to that?

Nichols: Uh, it... it... but... it just made me think of what my life was like.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nichols: Uh, wha... we were really poor. And my... our parents were separated and we lived with my mother and uh, we were on welfare during the Depression. Um, and I was a good student in... in school. But when I got to be old enough, then I... I would have jobs after school. And one job I had, I worked in a bakery for twenty-five cents an hour, and... but, I mean, that was the going rate. But I would wa... walk to the bakery and walk home at night, but without any fear, you know. It... we... we... we didn’t have to worry about being attacked or anything. Uh, it was in Glen Burry. And then later on I worked as a waitress at a restaurant called 'The Barn', on... It was on Richie Highway. But, so I worked there for... for a while.

Uh, and then, uh, I graduated fr... eh, from high school, and it was then, in 1943, that Martin’s k... sent um, recruiters to the high schools in the area to get girls to
come and work at Martins. So that’s what I... wh... what I agreed to do. Now, they were looking for girls who’d had all the math and science they could take. And I had been in the academic curriculum because all I wanted to do was go to college. So that... I couldn’t afford that, so... anyway, I agreed to work at... at Martins. And then they sent all of us girls- we were all seventeen, eighteen, I guess- to Johns Hopkins University. And they had a special class, a special course for us to teach us, uh, engineering drafting. So...

De Mare: And did they pay for that education?

Nichols: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

De Mare: Wow.

Nichols: And... and then I... I lived in rented rooms. ‘Cause my family was outside of Washington and I cc... I had to come to Baltimore. So I lived in various rented rooms, with other girls, and uh, so we would go to Martin... go down to... to Martins. I would take a streetcar down to North Avenue, and then they would have these... I guess they... they were school buses painted camouflage colors- and then tha...
that’s how I got back and forth to... to the... Martin’s everyday.

De Mare: Wow. Now, a couple of people have mentioned—sorry—a couple of people have mentioned that they lived in rooming houses. Can you talk about what the... how many people were in this area and what the life was like for you? Um, you know, uh, we haven’t heard from you about where you lived and how... how you existed at that time. So, can you talk a li... you should start us off.

Stemler: Well, I lived in an area called Gardenville. And, uh, my dad worked for the B & O railroad also, and uh, times were really hard then because they were... had so many layoffs. Fortunately, Dad was kept on the... his job. However, it, uh, the living conditions were really difficult because the money was not very plentiful. And uh, I graduated from high school at seventeen and a half in 1940.

And I got a job working for an, um, a... a... a wholesale grocer company. In those days, we didn’t have charge accounts and we didn’t have checks, so all of the people
who paid for their… their delivered groceries paid in cash. My job was to count that cash and balance it out with the bills. I was very unhappy with that job, especially because the supervisor whom I had— a woman supervisor. So my… my mom said, “You don’t have to work there. You can get another job.” I said, “Well, I have to work someplace long enough to say that I have experience.” So I stayed there for three months.

After that, that’s when I went to work for Liberty Mutual. And… and… that… after that, I could pay my mother some board because I was getting twenty-five dollars. On thirteen dollars I couldn’t have afford… afforded more. So, at that time I started paying my mom for five dollars a week for my board. But I had the… the pleasure of being able to walk up to Charles Street to these little dress shops up there, and I bought some lovely dress… dresses that I had never thought I would ever buy… be able to buy.

00:13:33:27------------------------------------------------

De Mare: Um, Elsie, do you wanna give us— because no one has— we still don’t have anyone saying on tape that… that Martin’s was the first place to hire women.
Arnold: Oh.

De Mare: Can you give us like a… a… sort of an overview of the history of the company? Ladies, jump in if there’s anything... I mean, really, you know, keep it... Keep it open.

Arnold: The Glen L. Martin Company opened in 1929 at this location in Middle River. And by the end of, uh, by the beginning of World War II, which was 1941, they had im... fifty-three thou... fifty-nine thousand employees. And, um, Glen L. Martin decided when so many of these young men who were employed here were being inducted into the service, uh, he decided that the next best thing would be to hire women. And he was the first employer in the United States- industrial employer- to employ... to hire women to do the work of men. I have no idea the number of women who worked here. I haven’t... have not researched that.

De Mare: I think it’s so interesting that they...

Arnold: It would be interesting to know...

De Mare: ...actively recruited you; that they went into the high schools and they paid for your education, and they
really... they brought... I think... I think that’s fascinating. I didn’t realize that that happened.

Arnold: When I worked in the... we started off in the small parts area.

Kelly: Can you just start that one more time: “When I worked...” Go ahead. Sorry.

Arnold: When I worked, uh, when I worked at the Glen L. Martin Company, uh, following the two weeks at the, uh, vocational school, I worked in the small parts area where most of the ladies did start off. And after a few weeks, then I graduated into, uh, drilling, um, a part of the wing portion and that was up... put up against the wall on a tram... temp... and a template went over it. Now, I had to use this... this, um, electric, um... it was a hand motor. And you put different sized drills, depending on whatever size was in the template. And I learned to do that job and, uh, I guess I ha... I did that for maybe two weeks. And the next thing, I found myself working on a huge, uh, drill press. It was suspended from the ceiling, and, uh, that was much
easier because that was all done on... on a surface. It was much easier than doing the drilling against the wall.

De Mare: Do you remember when you were first, kind-of taught... how... did you feel like you would be able to do the work? I mean, do you remember how you felt then?

Arnold: Yes. I enjoyed it. I really did enjoy it.

De Mare: Yeah.

Arnold: I use... I enjoyed using the tools and... and, uh, learning. It was something new to me.

De Mare: Yeah. Mary?

Nichols: Well, that... I did not enjoy my work. I was a tomboy. Y’know, I would much rather have been a welder or a, or a riveter. What I really wanted to do was to be a ferry pilot. But I was too young, so they... I... they wouldn’t let me do that. I... I was thinking... thinking about, y’know, uh, the... my living and how I lived in... in my room. But the point was, I... I was determined I was going to go to college, y’know, after the war. So I had to have
some money, so what I did, my first priority was to put money in the bank toward college. So, it limited me on, um, on streetcar fare and meals and... and dinner out. I must have gotten lunch at the... at... at Martin’s. I don’t remember. But what... what I would do is: towards the end of the week, I would have to choose. Was I... was I really hungry? In that case I’d go to the Oil Cafeteria, and... and then walk home thirty-nine blocks. Or, if I was really tired, then I’d... I... I would... I would do without dinner and ride the s... ss... um, streetcar home thirty-nine blocks. So.

00:18:13:13-------------------------------------------

Kelly: Was there any- when you were working in the factories- was there any challenges or- in your jobs- were there any challenges working with the men? Was it...

Nichols: Challenges?

Kelly: ‘Cause... ‘cause it was... it was the first time that a... this huge number of women came into the workforce. Were there... were there things that... that you had to face or challenges that you had to work through?
Arnold: No, because we were really treated with respect. The men really respected and they were very, uh, I... I can’t imagine today any of these men putting up with women breaking up so much of the... of the... for instance, the drills. We did not have the skills in the beginning to handle those motors. Those little hand motors. And, um, it was... you didn’t know where to put the pressure, but we were constantly breaking drills and then we had to go to a tool cage and... and, uh, get replace- have it replaced. We had to take the broken drill with us and replace it.

And when it on and on and I used to think, will I ever learn to accomplish anything but this? But finally I... you know, you just learn to accomplish something and... and things did slow down in that respect. But I don’t know of anyone who came to Martin’s and worked in the very beginning, who didn’t have some sort of a problem with the tools we were using.

De Mare: Well, it makes sense if you’d never used them before.

Arnold: Right.
De Mare: Was the... was the... was the... I know that the workforce was integrated between men and women. Was the... were there... how high would women rise in the company? Were there supervisors that were women or was it all men? Can you talk about...

Arnold: I think there were all men in the department I worked in.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nichols: Yeah, they were, too, in the engineering department.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nichols: With all men.

De Mare: Yeah. Do you wanna...

Nichols: Supervisors.
De Mare: Do you wanna tell me what... can you show me what it is that you worked on and what you did?

Nichols: Mm-hm. This is the B-26, which was the... the, um, plane in which I worked. Um, my job was to change drawings. They would give me a drawing- a velum drawing- and I'd have to use, you know, India ink on that and they'd... I'd have directions like, 'move the rivet a sixteenth of an inch to the right', or things like that. And that's what I had to do. My challenge- I did have a challenge- is not spilling the India ink and making a mess. That was a real challenge. But anyway, but, uh, yeah it... it was interesting. I mean, uh, I... I've always loved airplanes, so that was good, you know, that I enjoyed working on the airplane and the fact that I was contributing to the war effort.

Kelly: Did you ever learn... did you ever fly? Did you ever learn to fly?

Nichols: No, I never did. I would like to have, but it just never worked out.
De Mare: Do you want to show me the picture of the... of the clothes that you wore and talk a little bit about that?

Arnold: Yes. The... this is a picture of the uniform, uh, this would be the one. Uh, some of the ladies, I think, uh, um, who worked at Eastern Aircraft, said they- when they saw the picture- that was the coverall that they wore. But, uh, this was a two-piece affair. And, uh, the blouse was separate...

Kelly: Just hold it up one more time. Can you just hold it up...

Arnold: Oh.

Kelly: ...and say this is a two-piece affair?

Arnold: This... this was a two-piece. A... a blouse and, um, the... it was a overall; the straps went across in the back and... and, uh... uh... It was really worn that way to keep us from getting any loose clothing tangled up in any machinery. And then we also wore, uh... our heads were usually covered with a... a hairnet or, uh, in some cases
they wore these, um, scarf tied around it. But I didn’t… I didn’t encounter too many of the ladies who wore those unless it was while they were riveting. I also have a picture here of a rivet… of a riveter, and this was done with compressed air.

De Mare: And that’s what you did? That… that… you did… you did the…

Arnold: No, I did not do the riveting, I did the drilling.

De Mare: Okay.

Arnold: And the rivets went into the areas that were drilled.

De Mare: Right. It’s… it’s… it’s fascinating. I mean, that you really have…

Arnold: They really set it up very quickly to get all of this accomplished, to get these planes together. And they really… the planes went out of here so quickly. I mean, I can’t begin to tell you how many planes they… they built in this facility over… in… within a week.
De Mare:  Wow.

Kelly:  Was it... was it that because also the... the pla... there was a lot of planes going down so they really had to...

Arnold:  No.  but I think they really needed them overseas.  Um, and I know there were some of the Lady Wasps who, uh, came here to work and they were pilots and they would pilot- I mean, they would take some of the... the people who, uh, some of the, uh, inductees.  They would drive them up to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.  I mean, they would take the pilots... the planes... and take them back and forth up there.

De Mare:  Rita, did you have something you wanted to add to that?

Stemler:  Uh, the, uh, Glen L. Martins were supplying planes to our allies also because, uh, they had no other so... source of manufacturing over there.  So, a great deal of the planes went over to the Allies.  And, uh, I... I wanted to say that one of the problems of the... working at...
at Glen L. Martins was transportation, because it was located away from Baltimore City and transportation didn’t come this far. So, I know when I applied for a job I said, “Well, how can I get down here?” They said, “Oh, we’ll arrange that.”

So, fortunately the... in the, uh, employment office they had a list of... of, uh, people who had automobiles and lived in my area and who would be glad to give me a ride. So for the two years I had... I worked down here, I had a ride with the same man in his car. And we all... We had a full car of five people, and, uh, we... we paid him for transporting us. And it was very nice to have somebody pick you up at your house.

Arnold: It was something like fifty-cents a week...

Stemler: Uh-huh.

Arnold: ...I think we paid to ride. I did not ride with, uh, um, Rita.

Stemler: No, I think I paid more than that.
Arnold: But, uh, there were... they... that was how we... we did get to work. They selected people from different areas in the city who... who came a certain route and if you were in that direction, they... they’d had... they notified... they were notified...

De Mare: Yeah.

Arnold: ...to pick... pick us up.

Kelly: Why were... what was the general sense of the time? Why... why was our country at war?

Nichols: Because... because the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

Arnold: Right.

Stemler: Mmm.

Nichols: And that... and that was... that was the, uh, what... that was what instigated it. I mean, but it... but we had
been building toward war, uh, for a while. And it... as you... if you read accounts of the late thirties and early forties, we... we were beginning to go on a... a war footing. And... and, of course, we were building planes and tanks and all for our allies. For England and... especially. And, uh, so, y’know, that was part of it.

But you talk... the general... the general attitude here, it was unity. Everybody, you know, everybody... we had one goal to win the war. If we didn’t win the war, nothing else would matter. So everybody pulled together. Well, there are always some, you know, who... who didn’t, but, uh... But it was just a wonderful feeling and a wonderful attitude that we all worked so well together.

Kelly: What was the feeling about what was happening in Europe at the time?

Stemler: Oh. Prior... prior to the bombing of, uh, Pearl Harbor, there was a great, great feeling and movement here of “America First”. People did not want to get into Europe’s war and, uh, but, uh, then when... when Japanese bombed, uh, Pearl Harbor then we had the incentive that we had to fight back. We had to do... go, uh, assist the Allies in Europe as well as fight in the Pacific.
Kelly: Was there a lot of news coming from Germany and
with... and Italy and all that?

Stemler: Was there what?

Kelly: Was there a lot of news coming from Germany and
Italy and...?

Stemler: Oh, yes.

Kelly: And what...

Stemler: Oh, yes.

Kelly: Can you talk about the feeling about that?

Stemler: Oh, yes.

Arnold: The news we had usually came on the radio. Or if
you attended a... a movie, we had a news, uh, reel...
Nichols:  A news...

Arnold:  ...of what was going on around the world.

Nichols:  Yeah. Two or three.

Kelly:  Which was what? Which was what?

Arnold:  Um, uh, the feeling of, uh, what was going on over in Germany with Hitler. Uh, that was one of the things. He was attempting to rule the world. That was a very strong, uh, as far as Europe was concerned, that was, uh, the big factor over there. But the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was just so, so terribly devastating.

Uh, I have a... a nurse friend who lives at Oak Crest. She was in Pearl Harbor when that happened that morning and she was standing in the doorway talking to, uh, one of the young, uh, male, uh... one of the, uh, servicemen. And, uh, he looked up and saw this bomb heading down and he knocked her to the floor and it missed hitting her. That's an example of the things that happened that particular day. That... when I heard that, I just... and she... she's a very tiny, small... she's about the size of this lady right... Rita. I mean, that... it would've just probably blown her apart.
Stemler: Mm-hm.

Kelly: Tt... tt... put...

Stemler: After... after Pearl Harbor, the feeling of patriotism was unbelievable. It... it... Everyone, everyone had the feeling that we’ve got to do the best, we’ve got to win this war. And we’ve got to conserve, we’ve got to save. And there was a lot of cooperation and patriotism. And I think if you... it... it was amazing. The feelings that people had as far as participating and winning.

Nichols: The thing that I was not aware of was the Holocaust going on during the war. Uh, I think there were rumors that you’d hear, something was going on in... in... But... but it... wh... we didn’t know, we had no idea of the extent of, you know, of the Holocaust, until... until The Liberation when our troops went to the concentration camps and saw the people there and so forth. But, uh, it’s amazing that we didn’t know more about the Holocaust during the war.

00:31:00:08----------------------------------------
De Mare: Um, to... to take a little step back for a minute back to how the w... how the war... y’know, the war opened this door for you all to have the jobs that you had. I mean, you wouldn’t of, you would not... you may not have ever done the work that you did if it hadn’t been for the war. Can you talk about how you think it changed your life to do these things? To enter the workforce in this way, to earn the kind of money that you were able to earn, how you think that affected you, you know...

Arnold: It affected my life because I managed to save enough money to pay my tuition to go into nurse’s training. However when I applied- I applied to three hospitals, uh, hoping to get... to be admitted to one of them- one was Hopkins; their... they were filled with all their, um, for... for a year. Uh, Union Memorial was another hospital. I was accepted at a... a very small hospital who... where we had affiliation with Hopkins. And, uh, that was the Hospital for the Women of Maryland, which is now the nu... was the nucleus for GBMC, which is a very large hospital in Towson at this time. But, uh, I did accomplish my dream, and when I... at... when I went to for my interview I heard about the Cadet Nurse Corp. It was a government-sponsored program for, uh, training, uh, young women to become registered
nurses. So I was very fortunate there. I also have a picture of the nurse, uh, cadet nurse uniform with me today. Uh.

Kelly: Do you think being a Rosie helped give you confidence...

Arnold: Oh, yes. Yes.

Kelly: ...to be a nurse?

Arnold: Yes. And you do gain a lot of confidence in yourself, too, when you become involved in taking care of sick people. You really have... We... we were taught to have compassion and we had a lot of, uh, uh, ethics. Professional ethics.

00:33:14:24------------------------------------------------

De Mare: Rita, do you wanna talk about how... how you think it affected you to... to...

Stemler: Yes. Uh, I developed a great deal of confidence in myself and pride in the work I was doing and I... it... and...
it... influenced me professionally for the future because I knew what I could accomplish and... and I would not sell myself short in the future jobs.

De Mare: Yeah. Mary?

Nichols: Well, it, um, even though I did not like the kind of work I did, I did my best, and things that I learned as a draftsman have carried over to the rest of my life. You know, in terms of measuring. For example, I... I can pretty much look and tell you how, uh, how much a foot is. I could show you and I’m pretty accurate with it. But, uh, things like that, you know, um, have... have been helpful and I’ve used them all my life.

De Mare: What did you go on to do later in life? What were the other jobs that you had after the war?

Nichols: After the war, I went to... as soon as the war was over I enrolled at the University of Maryland. Quit my job the next day and enrolled at the University of Maryland. Because that was all I wanted to do was to go to college. And so I majored in early childhood education. So, uh,
and... and then I worked, you know, off and on through the years teaching little ones.

De Mare: Yeah.

Kelly: Did you ever feel... I mean, when... so... when the... when a lot of the jobs for the women were... were taken away or the men came back and, um, was there ever... did you see any, sort of, um... was it... was there any sort of, um, hardships or struggles, maybe not with you personally, but were you seeing around where... where women had... had to stop working and go back in the home or was there... through the years did that ever have an effect in terms of...?

Arnold: I guess I didn’t experience anything. I left Martins after two years. It, uh, it was 1944 when I left and I... that’s when I entered training. And when the war... the day, uh, uh, the war was over, I was on night duty and I knew nothing about it. I was sleeping all day and I got up late in the afternoon and I was all... everybody... I was wondering, where is everyone? I... nobody is around in this... because we lived in a nurse’s home... and, uh, I didn’t see anyone; everything was so quiet.
I did get over to the cafeteria and found out about... the war was over. And, uh, everybody was in such a very jovial mood and so many of the nurse’s, if they were off... as soon as they were off duty, they would get... they dressed them... they changed their uniforms and they went downtown and joined in all of the festivities. It was, uh, just, uh, uh, marvelous feeling to know that everything, you know, that things were really being accomplished.

Kelly: Now one of you... I... I heard from this story... did one of you have, um, some... worked with some Germans that had to... that got pulled out from some...

Nichols: Some what?

De Mare: Was that you...

Stemler: Oh.

De Mare: ...Rita?

Stemler: Oh.
De Mare: Did you... yeah... Can you tell us story?

Stepler: Yes. While I was working, uh, in... in engineering personnel, we had, uh, you know, many, uh... they were very highly technical people that were working there. And, uh, I guess in... in the two year... two year, I... we... I experienced at least three or four occasions when these tall, very, very stern men would come to my desk and ask to speak to my boss. I would go to him and bring him out. He would take them into his... their office. They would be there about five minutes. And then the three of them would walk down to somebody’s desk and escort that person from the building. And most of the time the reason was that this... these people had recently made trips back to Germany and they were suspect. So it... it... it always gave me such an eerie feeling to have this happen. And I... I... I always fretted when I’d see those tall, dark men in the dark suits coming in the office.

Arnold: I experienced, uh, when I was on affiliation over at Hopkins for about eight months, um, we lived in the nurse’s home over there, and I saw these people out in the hall doing all this painting and... and, um, I went over to
talk to one of them. They were prisoners of war. They didn’t understand English. And they were from Germany but they were housed out at Fort Meade and this is what... they had daily jobs. Many of them wanted to stay in this country but they were sent back.

De Mare: It’s so... it’s so interesting. Um, can you, um... You talk so well about, um, kind of your... how you felt during... during this time. Why do you think you all, I mean, it was such a short period of time in a way, but yet, you all are still members of the Rosie the Riveters Association, you still are very active in that. Can you talk a little bit about why think that part of your life has stuck with you so much? You know, why... why you’re here... why you’re here today? Oh, you know...

Arnold: I think it’s a camaraderie that everyone had at that time. I mean, we just felt as though we were just as much a part of the war, I guess, because we were helping with the war effort. We were a part of that. And I really think this organization has been a wonderful... I did not join this organization, uh, in the very beginning. We had,
uh, one of the senators in Washington had a... a big, uh, oh, we had... did you come over to that? At Dundalk Community College.

Nichols: No. Mm-nn.

Arnold: They had... she had a big reception there, and she spoke and she said, “The women of the war.” And we were all invited and I was so amazed to see so many of my friends who I had met and had been acquainted with, uh, prior to this... this big, uh, reception. I mean, so many people were here and I walked along and I was amazed to see how many people really worked in this... women worked here.

Nichols: I think that was 1995.

Arnold: Yes.

Nichols: And I didn’t... 

Arnold: And that was the beginning of this Rosie the Riveter Group.

Nichols: Right, it was. Mm-hm.
Stemler: Well, I think that patriotism has never shown itself greater than it did at that time.

Kelly: Can you say that just one more time? Start that sentence.

Stemler: Patriotism has never been as widespread in the United States as it was at that time. The feeling of cooperation and faith in our leaders. Attitudes have changed greatly. Cynicism has crept in. And we’re not sure that we can trust our leaders now.

00:41:27:11-----------------------------------------------

Kelly: Yeah.

De Mare: Is there… is there anything, um, is… I mean, I wish we had so much more time to talk to you all.

Arnold: I had forty years in nursing. I… I stuck with it for forty years.
De Mare: Yeah. I... I just am amazed by your commitment to that time in your life. And is there anything else that you would like to say before we have to go to the next group? Is there any other story you’d like to tell or thing you wish you could communicate about what that time in your life meant to you? How you think it changed you? How you think it’s different from today? I mean, anything that you’d like to say.

Arnold: One thing, we could... we would get off work if we wanted to go for a walk- I recall that my cousin and I used to walk to a movie, it was blocks and blocks away- you wouldn’t think... today you just cannot travel one or two people. You don’t go alone. I used to go to work. I would walk down to meet my drive... my rider... the driver, uh, in darkness, during the winter months. Wait on the street corner for him to come along and pick me up. And the same way, many times, we worked late in the evening and it would be dark when I... we... I... I got out of the car and walked back the few blocks to get back to, uh, where I was living. It... it was... to think today you just have to think about where you’re going and your transportation. You just don’t walk everywhere. And consequently, look what’s happening to all of us. We either have to join a health club.
Nichols: I was going to say that it was such an abnormal time and I was seventeen, you know, when I was recruited to work at Glen L. Martin, and I don’t think I thought it through. But there was an impact of... of the fact it was an abnormal time and, um, I guess I just, uh, and I’m sure it affected me, uh, and... but it... There again, it was that unity again, you know, that we talk... we keep talking about and I think it... it has affected the rest of my life. I think that it was such a big part of my life. It was the most important thing in my life at that time. The... the only thing, really, that mattered. Nothing else really mattered if we didn’t win the war. So I think in that way it definitely affected me.

De Mare: Rita?

Stemler: Well, at that time I had a brother who was a gunner- a nose gunner- on a Liberator in... in Europe. And it... For me, it was very, very worrisome. And I also had a husband who was in cadet training in, well, in... in Texas. So, um, I had the worry of these airplanes holding up and
doing their job and... and the... and the pilots doing their job and... and that nothing, harm... no harm came to them. Well, unfortunately, at one point my... my brother’s plane was disabled and had to, uh, land in Belgium. But, uh, uh, fortunately, the Belgian people got them back to England and things went along fine. But he put in two... two, uh, rounds of twenty-five flights each and that... worrying about him was terrible. But then when I went down to... to Victoria, Texas, for my husband’s graduation to get his wings, I saw this huge, huge, huge, pile of disabled, wrecked planes. And it was... and I was... I asked about that and he said, “Oh, that’s the planes that we all have accidents in.”

Nichols: Oh.

Stemler: “And they just keep piling it on the side.” And so, naturally, my worry was just as great for him in the planes down there.

Kelly: Good. Good.

De Mare: Yeah. We’re at the end of the tape. Thank you, ladies...
Arnold: That’s alright.

De Mare: ...so much. I can’t tell you how, um, how wonderful it’s been to talk you. All of you. So thank you very much.

Arnold: We have really enjoyed... I’ve enjoyed the two days of being with you guys.

De Mare: Oh, good. Good.

Arnold: It’s just been wonderful.

Kelly: Thank you.

De Mare: Thank you so much.