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Mary Drouillard

Rosie the Riveter

World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by  
Robin Li  
in 2012

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Mary Drouillard

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Interview 1: Mary Drouillard, February 24, 2012  
Begin Audiofile 1

Li: This is Robin Li, speaking with Mary Drouillard on February 24, 2012 in Bellevue, Washington. Thank you so much for sitting down with me today and telling me some of your stories. Before we talk about the war time, I wanted to just hear a little bit about how you grew up and where you're from. Could you tell me your full name and when you were born?

1-00:00:29

Drouillard: Mary Jane Todd Drouillard.

Li: And when were you born?

1-00:00:36

Drouillard: 2/26/20.

Li: Where?

1-00:00:43

Drouillard: Morrilton, Arkansas.

Li: What part of Arkansas is that in?

1-00:00:52

Drouillard: It was a small town, and I left there when I was just a baby. I don't remember.

Li: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

1-00:01:04

Drouillard: My parents are both dead. My mother was a nurse, and my dad was a carpenter.

Li: What kind of a nurse was your mother?

1-00:01:25

Drouillard: She was like Ruth is; she took care of people, older people.

Li: Were they both from Arkansas?

1-00:01:33

Drouillard: Yes, We were all born in Arkansas. I had a sister. She's dead now, but she was born there too. My whole family's dead.

Li: What were your parents' names?

1-00:01:53

Drouillard: Vera and Oliver Todd.

Li: T-O-D-D?

1-00:01:56

Drouillard: T-O-D-D.

Li: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

1-00:02:02

Drouillard: A sister, and she was named Josephine.

Li: Was she older or younger than you?

1-00:02:05

Drouillard: She was older.

Li: How old were you when you left Arkansas?

1-00:02:11

Drouillard: Probably about five.

Li: So you don't remember there?

1-00:02:17

Drouillard: No. I don't remember it at all.

Li: How did you come to leave Arkansas?

1-00:02:22

Drouillard: I don't know. They didn't tell me. I was probably four or five years old; they don't tell you anything. [laughs]

Li: Where did your family move to?

1-00:02:32

Drouillard: Tennessee. That's where I went to school.

Li: Where in Tennessee?

1-00:02:37

Drouillard: Memphis. I guess my dad was probably following work.

Li: Can you tell me a little bit about growing up in Memphis, what that was like?

1-00:02:47

Drouillard: I don't remember too much about it; I was only nine when I left there. It was a big city. I don't remember too much about it. I just have little vague memories of it because we weren't there so long. Then we moved to Washington. It was a long move. My mother had family up here.

Li: Where did you move to in Washington?

1-00:03:24

Drouillard: Seattle. Lived in Seattle for many years?

Li: What prompted your mom, or your parents, to move to Seattle?

1-00:03:37

Drouillard: My mother left my dad. And then he followed. She took him back.

Li: So you came to Seattle when you were nine?

1-00:03:48

Drouillard: Yeah, about eight, I think.

Li: What do you remember about Seattle, then?

1-00:03:54

Drouillard: Oh, a lot because I lived there a long time. In fact, I left there about twenty years ago. Then when I left there I lived in West Seattle. I loved it in Seattle.

Li: What was West Seattle like in the thirties?

1-00:04:15

Drouillard: Very nice. Oh, the thirties. I don't remember; of course, I lived there after I was married. We had a lovely home over there; I liked it very much. Not too far from the sound.

Li: Were you and your sister close?

1-00:04:33

Drouillard: Yes.

Li: Did you go to the same school?

1-00:04:37

Drouillard: She was four years older. She was enough older that when she was in high school I was in grade school. She was like another mother. [laughs]

Li: What schools did you attend in Seattle?

1-00:04:54

Drouillard: In Seattle, Leschi grade school, and then I moved to Bothell High School.

Li: Leschi was pretty woodsy then, wasn't it?

1-00:05:09

Drouillard: I don't remember too much about it. It had a lot of ethnic people, Jewish.

Li: Was there much interaction between different ethnicities? Did people—?

1-00:05:25

Drouillard: Well, you know kids. They don't care who you are. You like everybody.

Li: Can you share with me some of your experiences from the Great Depression time? Do you remember what that was like, people being out of work and—?

1-00:05:44

Drouillard: It was pretty bad. It was scary, like it's getting now. Of course, I was a child. It didn't bother me that much. I didn't go without food or anything like that. My parents were very good about taking care of me, so I didn't have any problems, just having fun. I learned to drive when I was fourteen, I think. My sister got married; she was the driver for my mother. When she left and got married somebody had to drive for my mother because women that age didn't drive usually in those days. So I learned to drive, and I drove her. And I drove without a license for quite a few years, and I never got caught.

Li: Was your mother working; when you came to Seattle was she working here?

1-00:06:44

Drouillard: No, she didn't work until after she and Dad parted again.

Li: You said you had family up here?

1-00:06:54

Drouillard: Yes, my mother had sisters that lived here. And her mother at that time lived here.

Li: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother, what she was like?

1-00:07:09

Drouillard: She was Mom. A really nice, sweet lady. It's been a long time since she died.

Li: Did she encourage you in your schoolwork?

1-00:07:26

Drouillard: Oh, yes. She expected great things from me.

Li: Would you talk about what you'd like to be when you grew up with her? Did you, when you were a little girl, have aspirations of things you wanted to do?

1-00:07:42

Drouillard: I think I did. What did I want to do. I can't remember now. All it turned out to be is I went to work when the war started and built British mine sweepers.

Li: Did you have figures that you looked up to? Were there any women that you admired?

1-00:08:07

Drouillard: Oh, probably, yes.

Li: Movie stars, or—?

1-00:08:11

Drouillard: I don't know if I looked up to movie stars. I liked them, but—. [laughs] I didn't know anything about them, really, personally.

Li: What was your favorite subject in school when you were in elementary school or high school?

1-00:08:34

Drouillard: I think I liked history, and I liked mathematics.

Li: Did many women you knew go to college at the time?

1-00:08:45

Drouillard: No.

Li: Did you ever consider that as an option?

1-00:08:50

Drouillard: It was not an option. That was right in the Depression.

Li: What year did you graduate from high school, then? 1938?

1-00:09:01

Drouillard: About that, I think.

Li: What were your plans after graduation?

1-00:09:10

Drouillard: I got married.

Li: Oh, you got married right away. How did you meet your husband?

1-00:09:13

Drouillard: His dad brought him out to meet me; I met his dad first. His dad liked me. He worked in the park that my sister was working in. They were keepers of the park [Carkeek Park]. And I was over there living with them part of the time. I met him there. He was a worker there. He said, "I'm going to bring my son out to meet you." He did. And we got married after about a year. We went together about a year.

Li: What was dating like then? Did you go out on dates a lot?

1-00:09:47

Drouillard: Oh, yes. He had a car, and he drove. Had a nice car. You know kids; they like a nice car.

Li: What would you do on dates; what kinds of things?

1-00:09:56

Drouillard: Movies. That was about it. There wasn't as much to do in those days as there is now.

Li: You got married right after graduation?

- 1-00:10:09  
Drouillard: Yeah. Shortly after,
- Li: What did your husband do?
- 1-00:10:17  
Drouillard: My husband worked for Kenworth Motor Truck Corporation, Paccar. He was a manager, of the paint department.
- Li: Was he the same age as you?
- 1-00:10:40  
Drouillard: A couple of years older.
- Li: Did you pay much attention to politics in high school? Did you read newspapers?
- 1-00:10:45  
Drouillard: Not in high school too much, no.
- Li: Were you aware of the Japanese invading China?
- 1-00:10:50  
Drouillard: Oh, yes. I read papers; I was a newspaper reader. I knew what was going on.
- Li: Were your parents newspaper readers?
- 1-00:11:07  
Drouillard: Oh, yes. That's one thing I inherited from them, I guess. I take one now. As soon as I got here, I signed up for a newspaper.
- Li: Did they talk about politics much at home?
- 1-00:11:18  
Drouillard: Yes. My mother and dad were Democrats.
- Li: Do you remember what things they talked about in terms of the war or the President at the time?
- 1-00:11:46  
Drouillard: I don't remember; I'm sure they did. But I probably wasn't interested.
- Li: Can you tell me where you were when you heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
- 1-00:11:59  
Drouillard: I think I was married then. I know it was so frightening; it was a scary thing.. We had to keep our curtains covering the windows, heavy curtains.
- Li: Oh, yes, the blackout?

1-00:12:21

Drouillard: The blackout. Every night. A lot of people don't know that, that we lived through blackouts in Seattle. I was married then. We had to cover up the windows every night. It was scary. Then of course they asked women to come to work. They needed women because the men were all off to war. So that's how I became a welder, a Rosie the Riveter.

Li: I'm, sorry I didn't get—what was your husband's name?

1-00:12:54

Drouillard: Albert Drouillard.

Li: Did he enlist?

1-00:12:58

Drouillard: No, he had asthma, and they wouldn't take him. So he worked for the war effort too. He worked at Kenworth, and they built trucks and things for the war effort. Everybody had to do that. If you didn't go to war you had to work for the war.

Li: Where did you first hear about them hiring women, wanting women to work in the factories? Was it in the newspaper?

1-00:13:35

Drouillard: It was in the newspaper. They begged us. And on radio. They said, "Please come to work. We need you women." They trained us and paid us at that time good wages. The same as men would make, the same. We were considered the same because we were working for the government. We had good training.

So I decided to be a welder. I'm not a riveter; it says "Rosie the Riveter" in that book, but I was a welder. I did do some riveting at Boeing; I worked there for a while and I riveted. Horrible job. Working in the wings. I was little, and they said, "Put the little one in the wing." And erggh [sound of dismay]; I was the little one. And I had to lay down, like this, and hold the rivet, and buck hard against the rivet gun. I'd go home, and my hand was so sore I couldn't even move my hand.

Li: So you'd have to crawl out inside the wing.

1-00:14:30

Drouillard: I had to crawl in and out of the wing, which is only about this high; at that time wings weren't too big. After that, I thought, "This is not for me." So I decided to go to the shipyard and get a job as a welder and work on these British mine sweepers. I liked that a lot better. And I was my own boss. I had helpers, two or three young men helping, kids in college.

Li: Was it pretty easy to leave the riveting job and get the welding job? Was it pretty easy to move?

1-00:15:06

Drouillard: It was easy, yeah. I had to take that kind of job. I wanted to go get a job as an elevator operator in a department store, and they wouldn't let me. I got the job, but they said, "No you can't. You're frozen on your job working for the government. So you have to work for the government." So I had to go back to a dirty job again.

Li: So when you wanted to leave Boeing, you looked for another job. But they said that once you've started working for the government you have to stay in the government job.

1-00:15:34

Drouillard: You have to stay with it. So they would train you for a new type of job if you don't like the one you're on. But you had to stay with government work; you had no choice. Well, I wanted to be an elevator operator so bad. [laughs]

Li: How long were you at Boeing, a few months?

1-00:15:54

Drouillard: Just a short while at Boeing because, like I say, I couldn't take that with those wings being too little and having to get in there. My sister worked there, but she could stand around outside. She was larger than me.

Li: She worked at Boeing?

1-00:16:09

Drouillard: Yes.

Li: And was this at Boeing Field, down—?

1-00:16:11

Drouillard: My mother worked at Boeing Field. Families all—everybody worked that could work. Because they needed everybody they could get. Everybody was at war.

Li: Was the factory down at Boeing Field, south of Seattle?

1-00:16:30

Drouillard: Yes.

Li: And did your sister and your mother stay there?

1-00:16:32

Drouillard: I think they stayed there a little longer than I did. I went to the shipyard, and I liked that better.

Li: When you were at Boeing what shift did you work, do you remember?

1-00:16:44

Drouillard: Day shift.

Li: Was it mostly women who were doing the kind of work you were doing?

1-00:16:49

Drouillard: Yes. Young kids, like I said, young boys from college would come and be our helpers. I think they were about as old as I was.

Li: Tell me about learning to weld.

1-00:17:07

Drouillard: It's really easy. [laughs] The only thing that wasn't much fun was, I'd have to go to the side of the ship on a plank, hung by two ropes, and weld the side of the ship outside. That was scary.

Li: Where were the shipyards that you were working at?

1-00:17:27

Drouillard: Associated Shipyards on Harbor Island. And I worked at Todd Shipyard, which is my name. No, it wasn't either at that time; I was married by then.

Li: You said you were your own boss? How did that work?

1-00:17:48

Drouillard: Well, there was a lead man, and he'd have a crew. He'd put you on the job, and you were in charge of it. You had helpers that came and helped you with it and pick up your tools and pack them for you.

Li: What would a job be? Would it be to a particular ship or part of a ship?

1-00:18:04

Drouillard: {Drill?} part of a ship. I'd work on the outside, over the side like I said, over water. I didn't like that very much. Then at times I'd work down in deep holds, down over the engine room, or something like that. That was bad, standing on a plank. It was hard work. It was not easy.

Li: Would it just be you and then your helpers, down in that area?

1-00:18:38

Drouillard: When I was a welder I didn't have a helper. When I was a coppersmith I did. That's when I was doing the crawling in the wings at Boeing.

Li: Were most of the other welders women?

1-00:18:57

Drouillard: Um-hmm. There were some men welders, but they were only if they had had things—like my husband's asthma or something. They can't take people like that. They can't have you having an asthma attack when you're out fighting a war. So they wouldn't take anybody with asthma.

Li: Were you on a day shift?

1-00:19:14

Drouillard: Always a day shift because I had a little girl after I got married, and I wanted to be home with her..

Li: When was she born?

1-00:19:25

Drouillard: She was born in 1940.

Li: What's her name?

1-00:19:33

Drouillard: Jo Krueger.

Li: Where would she be during the day when you were working?

1-00:19:38

Drouillard: A very nice nursery. The government provided us that; otherwise I wouldn't have been doing it. They provided us with good care for our children. It tells about it in that book, that they had little tiny beds for them, and they had little tables, and everything. They had schoolteachers to take care of them so she got such a good start in school by going when she was just a little toddler, two years old. Two and three and four. So she got good training, a good start in life. The government was very good to us for that. They so wanted us to work; they just had to have everybody they could. Do the work in order to build all those ships and everything.

Li: Did you have to pay for the child care?

1-00:20:30

Drouillard: Oh, yes. I paid for her breakfast and also for her care during the day. It wasn't a lot. She wouldn't eat breakfast at home, so they served breakfast if she wanted it. She loved it. She'd say, "Going to school, going to school." She was so happy. Well, she was an only child. She wanted to be with other kids, and that was fun. So that made it nicer for me. I didn't have to leave a crying child when I went to work.

Li: Did most of the women you worked with, were they your age and also had small children?

1-00:21:12

Drouillard: They were all ages and all colors and everything.

Li: Were there any issues with women of different races?

1-00:21:19

Drouillard: Oh, no. Not at all.

Li: Was that the first time that you worked closely with people who were of a different racial background?

1-00:21:30

Drouillard: Probably.

Li: Were there a lot of people coming to Seattle just to work in the shipyards, that you remember?

1-00:21:35

Drouillard: Oh, yes.

Li: Do you remember where they were coming from? All over?

1-00:21:44

Drouillard: All over.

Li: A lot of the Rosies that I've talked to said that they signed up to work at the factories out of a sense of patriotism and wanting to be part of the war. And other women just said it was a good job and the money was good.

1-00:22:03

Drouillard: It was both, really [laughs] because we were coming out of the Depression into a time when we had it good, making good money. We made the same as men made. And there were girls from, oh, North Dakota and South Dakota, and all over. They came because that's where the work was, here on the coast. That's probably how the city grew at that time.

Li: You talked earlier about feeling scared of being bombed, pulling down the blackout curtains at night. Did that feeling continue throughout the war for you?

1-00:22:40

Drouillard: Somehow you learn to live with it somehow, you know? It's the way life is. I think other countries have had the same thing.

Li: Could you tell me a little bit about the interactions between men and women at the shipyards?

1-00:23:09

Drouillard: Of course I was young, and the guys all hit on me. "Shall we go dancing tonight?" "No, I'm married." [laughs] Yeah, they all wanted to date me.

Li: Was there a lot of dating going on at the shipyards?

1-00:23:22

Drouillard: I don't know. I didn't go. I was married. [laughs]

Li: Did you hear other girls talking about it?

1-00:23:27

Drouillard: No. I think they were all pretty much married. And most of them were older than me anyway. I was one of the young ones that was in there.

Li: Was there any negative interaction between the men and the women in terms of the workplace?

1-00:23:49

Drouillard: Not at all. I was surprised. There wasn't at all. Like I say, men worked for the women; they were helping me, young men. They were real nice.

Li: Can you tell me about the coppersmithing you were doing?

1-00:24:12

Drouillard: That was when I first went to the shipyards. I was a coppersmith, and I used a torch then, too. And I used silver to weld with. Like flanges to put pipes together with. My husband called me a toilet mechanic. [laughs] Because I was welding toilets I guess. And the boats there was just a big tray down there on the floor for the men to use in the big ships. So I built those, and I did the steering gear.

Li: What kind of boats were these?

1-00:24:53

Drouillard: British mine sweepers.

Li: How big were they?

1-00:24:57

Drouillard: Not very big, It's hard to say how big they were. Probably as big as that building.

Li: So not the huge liberty ships.

1-00:25:09

Drouillard: No. Mine sweepers are smaller. But that was fun working on that; I kind of enjoyed it. But, you know, I got sparks down my— The women at that time, we had to wear leather, total leather, and high boots. But women, you know, they've got a little gap here. Sparks would get in there and burn, burn, burn. [laughs] They'd just burn right through. They're molten metal; that's what it is. You can imagine. It would burn a hole in whatever it hit. So my bras had a bunch of holes and burns in there. The men didn't have that; the things would just fall on down to—their shirts were straight. Women didn't have that. They didn't make them to fit women. They were men's leathers that we wore.

Li: Was it hot?

1-00:26:07

Drouillard: Weighed forty pounds. My husband put me on the scale and says, "See how much you weigh." Forty pounds. I had to climb around with all that extra weight on me. It was hard. I had a hard job. I earned that extra money.

Li: How long were the shifts?

1-00:26:28

Drouillard: Eight hours. Started early in the morning.

Li: And for your lunch break was there a cafeteria, or would you bring your lunch?

1-00:26:38

Drouillard: We brought our lunch. We sat on a box or something and ate it.

Li: It seems like it would be a lot to take off all that gear and put it back on.

1-00:26:48

Drouillard: We didn't take it off. And we had to tie our hair up in a scarf. Always had to have your hair in. You could never have your hair out. No one knew what your hair looked like, because hair would burn.

Li: Were you scared at work working with the torches? Was it scary, or did it become normal?

1-00:27:10

Drouillard: It became normal. I was more scared of the people [laughs] than the fires and all of that.

Li: What was scary about the people?

1-00:27:22

Drouillard: Well, these guys hit on you.

Li: Were they pretty aggressive?

1-00:27:29

Drouillard: Yeah, they **were smarts?**

Li: What would you do to—?

1-00:27:38

Drouillard: I'd say, "I'm married. I've got a child. I'm not interested.

Li: Did you meet women friends at work?

1-00:28:00

Drouillard: Oh, yeah. A few women friends. You'd only see them at lunchtime because you're working during the day all day long. So you didn't really make good friends with them. But at lunchtime you'd sit and talk to people. My sister worked there for a while too, so I'd sit with her.

Li: Was she welding also?

1-00:28:10

Drouillard: What was she doing? I don't remember what she was doing because we never were together. She didn't work on the ship; she worked on the shore. There were ship's shops that you worked at on the shore that you worked in too. But I was one that had to get on the boat.

Li: What were the British mine sweepers used for?

1-00:28:36

Drouillard: Sweeping mines. [laughs]

Li: Could you tell me what—they would go into—?

1-00:28:41

Drouillard: This was war. They don't tell you anything.

Li: Did you know at the time what your ships—?

1-00:28:48

Drouillard: I think that they were used to detect mines under water, and so that's why they weren't so terribly big. And I'm sure that's what it was, but they wouldn't tell you anything like that; you just went to work and you worked. Everything was hush-hush. We were doing it for the Brits too, and they would come over occasionally and have speeches. We had movie stars come and entertained us.

Li: Really? Who came to entertain you?

1-00:29:21

Drouillard: Oh, you probably wouldn't know them. [laughs] I'm just trying to think of the names of some of them that came. I think right now they're probably dead. But they'd come and talk to us, and sing to us. They did entertainment at lunch. They tried to make our life a little nice. I didn't mind it. I like having a job and working, my first time to work. I went to work right after leaving high school.

Li: You were building ships for the English also, for the British?

1-00:29:55

Drouillard: Yeah. British. I worked for the British ones. I think I worked on some English American ships too, but that's when I was a coppersmith. But when I became a welder I worked on British mine sweepers. They were all in the same shipyard.

Li: Was welding a promotion over being a coppersmith?

1-00:30:14

Drouillard: No. I just decided to be a welder instead of a coppersmith.

Li: What made you want to change?

1-00:30:22

Drouillard: I can't remember why I changed. I just can't remember. Maybe they needed more welders. At least I went back to school to learn. I went back to school two or three weeks.

Li: Was the school in the shipyards?

1-00:30:42

Drouillard: It was across the street. And they paid us the whole time they were training, the same wage we would get.

Li: Who would be teaching you? Who were the teachers?

1-00:30:52

Drouillard: I don't know who they were. Just teachers. People that knew how to weld, and people that knew how to do coppersmithing. But it only took a few weeks because it's actually a physical job. It's not a— but you had to read blueprints, because you had blueprints on the ship so you knew where to put the stuff.

Li: You were getting your paycheck from the US government; that was who your employer was.

1-00:31:22

Drouillard: Yes. That's why there was no difference between men and women as far as pay was concerned. If you do the job, you should get the pay. But, you know, nowadays it's, "Aw, women don't need to get as much as men." There is still that attitude, I think.

Li: Was it the US Navy that you were working for?

1-00:31:54

Drouillard: Yes, US Navy.

Li: You said there was a supervisor. Was he in the military, then?

1-00:32:05

Drouillard: No, he was just one of the lead men.

Li: Did you experience the rationing during the war? Can you tell me a little bit about it?

1-00:32:15

Drouillard: Yes, we only got stamps for shoes. We were allowed to buy a pair of shoes a certain amount—I can't remember how often—and I had to buy boots, because I had to cover my legs. So I got majorette boots because you didn't have to have stamps for that. You know these little white boots that come up that majorettes wear when they twirl that thing? I got those and wore them, and I didn't have to use my stamps for them. So I could use my stamps for high heels. [laughs]

Li: Where did you find the majorette boots? Did you have those from high school?

1-00:32:54

Drouillard: No. I bought them in the store. And my pants covered them, of course. But they were white. I don't know how they looked after I was welding for a while. But you had to have that because those sparks, whooh, they do terrible damage to you.

Li: Do you remember, were there accidents on the job pretty frequently?

1-00:33:15

Drouillard: Oh, yes. I saw them bringing dead people off a few times. When I come into work in the morning once I saw them bringing bodies off. I thought, "Oh." The gas or something had gotten in there. They didn't tell you a lot, you know. But something had happened, an explosion of some sort. It killed a lot of people. And it didn't even get in the paper. Of course, nothing about the war was ever in the paper. That's defense. There was nothing about defense that was put in the paper. Our defense was certainly kept private to our country, so they couldn't put it in the paper. So I don't know why they died or anything.

Li: How often did that happen?

1-00:34:00

Drouillard: Not often, but it did happen. I can't forget it. It was pretty scary, a young eighteen seeing all these dead people being brought off the ship I was going to be working on.

Li: Did they provide health care for you?

1-00:34:17

Drouillard: No. I think we had—we probably did, I can't remember. I didn't have much wrong with me. I didn't go to the doctor often.

Li: How many years were you working in the shipyard/ For how long?

1-00:34:34

Drouillard: I don't remember. Till the war was over. Till they said, "Okay, jobs go back to the men. Out, women."

Li: Do you remember when that happened, the day that happened?

1-00:34:48

Drouillard: Yes. "Women are out." By that time I was ready to go home. [laughs] I'd had enough. So I just went, "Glad to give up my job." But you know, I don't think it would happen these days.

Li: Do you remember when Hiroshima was bombed, how you heard about it?

1-00:35:12

Drouillard: Yeah, as much as they would let us know.

Li: Did you learn in the newspapers?

1-00:35:14

Drouillard: A little bit in the newspaper; they were careful about what they wrote. Everything was hush-hush because bad people can get hold of it, tell it over there, whoever's our enemy. So everything was pretty hush-hush at that time, and people knew that. They had to be. They learned to live like that.

Li: How soon after that did you get your notice that you were fired?

1-00:35:46

Drouillard: I can't remember. As soon as the war was over and the men started coming back. We just knew that we had no job, and so they told us. That's just the way it was. You just left.

Li: Were some of the women sad about leaving work?

1-00:36:02

Drouillard: I don't know if they were or not, I imagine they were. Some might have been single who depended on it, I suppose. Or maybe they were like me and they'd had enough. It's hard on a woman to live like that, to work on a ship and stand up on a plank over an engine. I fell off of that once. Ugh.

Li: What happened?

1-00:36:28

Drouillard: Well, my hood came down. You just go like that, and your hood comes down, your welding hood. I was up there welding and decided to walk across the plank to go out, at night. So I have to have my hood up, and I'm walking across the plank, and all of a sudden something jostled me, and my hood came down. I couldn't see; it's black. Because unless your light's going, you know, you don't see anything. Over I went. Right off the plank.

Li: Into the water?

1-00:36:56

Drouillard: No. This time I was over the engine room. I fell, and it was pretty hard. But I'm pretty tough, I guess. I went to a doctor that time.

Li: Did you injure something?

1-00:37:09

Drouillard: Yeah, I injured my backside. It's still injured. Yeah, I fell kind of hard on my bottom.

Li: Did you have to stay out of work for a while?

1-00:37:26

Drouillard: I don't think so. Went to a doctor and came back to work. [laughs]

Li: Did you miss your daughter during the day? Was it hard to be away from her?

1-00:37:34

Drouillard: Well, like I say, she had such a good time. She just loved it. We'd come pick her up at night, and she was so happy. If she got sick, they had little beds for them and tool good care of them. So everything was happy, happy for her. She was a happy child. She was happier there than she would be hanging around home with me. Having all those kids to play with.

Li: Where was your home at this point? Were you in West Seattle?

1-00:38:06

Drouillard: West Seattle. On Thirty-fifth Southwest.

Li: How did you get to work?

1-00:38:15

Drouillard: We carpooled. Everybody carpooled. You had to have at least four people in your car, or you couldn't have gas.

Li: Really?

1-00:38:25

Drouillard: Right. That's another thing they gave you just points on, like buying shoes. You got so many stamps. And you got so many stamps for gas. So If you get several people to go with you then you get more stamps. So then you get more gas. So one man would take his car and fill her it with people. There were about five of us, I think, that went in the car. And we'd pay him, and that would pay for the gas.

Li: How long did it take you to get to work?

1-00:38:54

Drouillard: Not very far, not very long. Down to Harbor Island; it wasn't very far from West Seattle. There wasn't the traffic then that there is now.

Li: You said that you were pretty happy to leave welding, to be done at that point. What else did the end of the war mean for you?

1-00:39:13

Drouillard: You know, I don't have a lot of memory of after. I guess it was so traumatic living through the war. I think we were all so happy the war was over. It was nice to home. My husband made good money, so I didn't have to worry about having enough money. So it was all right.

Li: Did you have time to go out during the war years very much, or were you mostly going to work and coming home?

1-00:39:46

Drouillard: I didn't much feel like going anywhere. We'd go on vacation. Of course, we'd get two weeks' vacation a year, and we'd go on a trip somewhere. I've traveled the whole world.

Li: You would get two weeks off from the welding job when you were working at the shipyard?

1-00:40:09

Drouillard: Yes.

Li: Where would you go usually?

1-00:40:13

Drouillard: We went to the ocean quite a bit and went on trips to California to visit relatives. We'd go to Reno and gamble. My husband hit the jackpot once.

Li: Did you work again after the war?

1-00:40:39

Drouillard: Yes, I did. I didn't for a while; I stayed home with my youngster because she was getting a little older, then, and I was worried about her coming home to the house alone from school. So I stayed home most of the time then. Then I went to work again later on.

Li: What did you do when you went back to work?

1-00:40:57

Drouillard: What did I do? Well, I don't remember. I must have at Boeing still. No, I went to Boeing before I went to the shipyard. Where did I work, and what did I do? I didn't work for a while until she was older. I don't remember.

Li: For your husband, do you think it was difficult for him not to go to war?

1-00:41:35

Drouillard: I think it was embarrassing for him. He was just really embarrassed about it, that he was "not good enough." It's not very good to be told, "We don't want you because you've got asthma."

Li: Would people ask him why he wasn't there?

1-00:41:58

Drouillard: I don't know if they did or not. I don't think anybody did. I don't think anybody talked about things like that. It's kind of like it's a private matter. Who knows why? And there were enough men, quite a few men in the shipyard. I don't know why they were not in the war effort. Maybe they had to have some men; that could be. My husband was in the shipyard, but in a different one.

Li: Do remember when the Japanese were taken away?

1-00:42:39

Drouillard: Yes. That was sad. But you don't talk about it. You don't ask about it; you don't tell. "Loose lips sink ships," they used to say.

Li: So people didn't talk about it at work.

1-00:42:56

Drouillard: We didn't talk about anything to do with the war.

Li: Were there Japanese people in the area in West Seattle you were living in?

1-00:43:04

Drouillard: No, none living there, but there were a few where I worked. That's sad that that had to happen. I think they missed some schooling too. I think that was a disgrace of our country when that happened. I think that's something that's kind of been shoved under the rug. It wasn't my idea; I don't know whose idea it was.

Li: It seems like Seattle changed a lot during the war. Do remember that; do you remember it seeming very different?

1-00:43:50

Drouillard: Well yeah, it grew. A lot of people came in. And I guess a lot of Japanese—well, it was because we were at war with Japan; that's the reason that they were taken in. I think they realized later that that was a mistake. They were American citizens too. That was a terrible thing against them to be put in a place like that. That was terrible. Nobody said anything. The government did what they wanted to.

Li: You said there were Japanese people at work. At Boeing?

1-00:44:30

Drouillard: Very few. We didn't have as many people living here then, as many Japanese as we do now.

Li: Were they Japanese-American women?

1-00:44:42

Drouillard: I think they were Japanese.

Li: I wanted to ask you, did you attend church?

1-00:45:01

Drouillard: No.

Li: Not a churchgoer?

1-00:45:06

Drouillard: Nothing against it; I just wasn't raised that way, so I don't.

Li: Looking back now, how important was your participation in the wartime factories to you personally or professionally? How meaningful was that experience?

1-00:45:21

Drouillard: Oh, it was quite meaningful to me. I was the young girl, had been sheltered all my life, and here I was put among all these people that were different than I was. I met a lot of interesting people. I think I got out more and was with other people. I rode to work with a lot of people. I enjoyed it, I think. It was a good part of my life.

Li: Did it change the way you saw the world, or change the way you saw other people?

1-00:46:05

Drouillard: I don't think so. I think I just got to know more different kinds of people because they came from all parts of the United States up here to work.

Li: Are there any other experiences from this time that I haven't asked you about, any stories or particular memories that you want to share?

1-00:46:31

Drouillard: My memories aren't too good. [laughs] I'm doing good to get all this out. Because that's a long time ago. For my age I think I'm probably doing pretty good. I've got a lot of memories of the past; that's been a long time. Here I'm ninety-two next week.

Li: Amazing. Well, thank you so much for talking to me today. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

1-00:47:16

Drouillard: You're welcome.

[End of interview]