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**Marian Sousa**

**Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project**

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,  
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by  
Kathryn Stine  
in 2002

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Interview with Marion Sousa, September 30, 2002  
Interviewer: Kathryn Stine and Sarah Wheelock  
Transcriber: Sarah Wheelock  
[begin file Sousa1 09-30-02.wav]

1-00:00:02

**Stine:**

So we're here today with Marion Sousa, and it's September 30<sup>th</sup>. I'm going to start. I want to ask you questions about your time at the shipyards and your time in Richmond during the war, but first I want to find out your full name and where you were born, where you came from.

1-00:00:19

**Sousa:**

My name is Marion Lurlene Sousa, and I was born in Eugene, Oregon. You want the date, too?

1-00:00:28

**Stine:**

Oh, sure, if you want to give it to me.

1-00:00:32

**Sousa:**

January 6, 1926.

1-00:00:36

**Stine:**

So your family was from Eugene?

1-00:00:38

**Sousa:**

Yes. My father was a career Army man, and in fact he was a recruiting sergeant. So we stayed there until I think it was '39, when World War II was kind of going, people were being drafted. He had taken tests and stuff, so he got his commission as a captain. So he went from a recruiting sergeant to a captain, and then he was transferred to Fort Stevens, Oregon, which is on the coast and by the Columbia River. We all moved up there to be close with him.

1-00:01:20

**Stine:**

That was in 19—

1-00:01:24

**Sousa:**

1939 or '40, or something. It took a while to sell the house. I went to school at Seaside High School. Half of my sophomore and my junior year there at Seaside.

1-00:01:45

**Stine:**

I know you told me your sisters were down here, and that's why you moved down to the bay area, to Richmond.

1-00:01:51

**Sousa:**

Yes, my older sister was already living here before Pearl Harbor, she and her husband. So I came down in the summer of '42 to take care of their little boy. They were both welders at the Kaiser

shipyards. That summer I met my future husband, who was in the Coast Guard and stationed at Government Island in Alameda. His buddy's parents lived down the street from where my sister lived, so that's how we became acquainted. Then I got engaged, then I didn't want to go back to Seaside. [laughs] So I stayed and enrolled at Richmond High School for my senior year. Meanwhile, since war had been declared, my sister was welding and my other sister came down. She got a job as a welder also. But the house was beginning to get full, because it only had two bedrooms and one bathroom. Now we think we're deprived if you only have one bathroom in the house. So my brother-in-law's family was coming down. Everybody was coming to stay and stayed there at the house while they got their job. Then they could try to find a place to live, although housing was very difficult to find. But it was just getting so crowded that my sister Margie and I moved in with a woman who had a big house. She had opened it to girls and women who were working in the war industries. She was a grandmotherly type. Very good to me; I really lucked out meeting her. Her name was Ruby Bryant, and she was in real estate. So my sister and I lived there with her and I went to school and Margie went to work as a welder.

I completed my senior year but I got married during my senior year, so I was barely seventeen, which I don't recommend to anybody. It was wartime, you know. Wartime causes people to not really use their head. [laughs] I don't recommend it. So when I graduated in June of 1943, I was taking art classes. I have always been interested in art, and this teacher recommended me and two other girls for this special course that was taking place up at U.C. Berkeley, and it was to learn to be a draftsman. So we would take the Key System bus and go up there. Everybody walked during those times or took the buses. People had cars, but they weren't making any new ones, so you had to value what you had. We never rode in cars; we always took the bus. This was a six-week course on learning to be a draftsman. You had to learn the terminology and you had to read directions for something and then make a picture or a drawing from those directions. So you had to pay attention and you had to be precise and neat, and all this stuff. Six weeks of this going back and forth, and our final test was to make this blueprint. Actually, if the blueprint turned out the way it was supposed to look, that was your diploma and you graduated.

So on the day that we completed the course, the Kaiser recruiters came right to the classroom, hired us right out of the classroom and to my knowledge, everyone that passed. They were in desperate need. I was hired to go in the Engineering department of Yard Three on the outfitting dock. The first job was to correct the blueprints that had been made previously. Yard Three produced troop ships. They had already built one, but they had not built it according to the blueprints; they had made improvements. So my job was to correct and get those up to date to what they had already done. I spent—I don't know if it really was months, but it seemed like months. The officers' cabins had two bunks, and I had to make them three bunks. [laughs] But it had to be done.

We had senior draftsmen; they were actually in another room. They did the beautiful, beautiful drawings. We just helped relieve them from doing this little stuff that needed to be done. It was important work, but it was time-consuming and they really had more important things to do. But they never treated us with any disrespect. Never got the feeling of it. We were just a group of teenaged kids. I actually went to work when I was seventeen and they didn't realize that, so I had to get square with the Social Security people later on. A lot of people—military guys fibbed about their age too, to get into the service. There was a lot of that and I guess maybe they just looked the other way because we wanted to help. We wanted to do our bit to bring the war to the end. Our country was fighting on both sides, in Europe and in the South Pacific. It was a time of great patriotism, I mean really great. We were cautioned to not talk about our work, and in fact we didn't know what other people were doing. I just found out recently that they had a shipyard

in Stockton that built landing crafts and I had no idea. In fact, my sister worked at the Pre-fab just maybe a block from the Ford plant, didn't know that they were making tanks in there. So it was a lot of secrecy. Sabotage was a really big name, and we were cautioned, especially in the movies. Which we would all go to the movies. You'd stand in line; if you think lines are bad now, they were bad then because Richmond was just jammed with people. It went from about twenty-three thousand to a hundred thousand.

Everything was just overwhelmed, but you know, it wasn't a bad overwhelmed. It was energetic. There was lots of energy. You didn't mind standing in line to go to a restaurant, to go to a movie. All of these things were twenty-four hours a day, because people were working all shifts. They had dances. I did go to the local dances, but because I was engaged half of the time and married the other half. I was a married woman, but I did go to the dances with my girlfriends when my husband was gone. It was just a social thing like the USO.

1-00:10:09

**Stine:**

Was that put on through the city?

1-00:10:12

**Sousa:**

No, I don't remember it being organized in that way. You know, this was a lot of years ago and I had a lot of things that were going on. I had my first job, I was married. By that time, when I got married, my landlady had a little apartment up over her garage and she let my husband and I live there.

1-00:10:39

**Stine:**

Was that in the same house that you had been in with your sister?

1-00:10:43

**Sousa:**

Yes, because the house was for the girls and you couldn't bring a man in there to share the shower. So we had a little apartment over the garage, and then she found us a house. By that time I was pregnant, so it was necessary to find a house. She made it possible. She just did all this stuff. She had a car, she let us use her car; she was like my grandmother. In fact, she took us to the furniture store and said, "Pick out what you want." It was on her credit, so not only did we have the house but we had the furniture. I saved my allotment checks; I was lucky in that I had been able to save that and that was my down payment on the house. That two-bedroom house with a 25-foot lot cost three thousand, seven hundred dollars in 1944. Can you believe that?

1-00:11:55

**Stine:**

So different.

1-00:11:56

**Sousa:**

So I was a homeowner at eighteen, which was unusual because so many people didn't have any place to stay. We had neighbors who lived in the neighbor's garage. It was a family, husband and wife and a little girl, and they lived in the garage next door. They had the kitchen privileges and bathroom privileges, but still, that was their home, was the garage. They were lucky, because there just wasn't housing. In the early years when you would go to the movies, people were sleeping in there. They didn't have a place to stay, so they would go to the movies and just sleep.

At any time of the day you'd have sleepers in there, but you couldn't blame them. It was safe. I recently heard of a woman who had lived in San Francisco and transferred back and forth on the ferries to work in the shipyards. She said there'd been a storm and they were instructed to wear lifejackets, so she said that's the last time she took the ferry. She was going to live in Richmond since she worked there, so she kept her stuff in the locker at the Greyhound bus station and would change and then eat, and then she would go to the movies and that's where she would sleep, until she could find housing. So it wasn't just men. It was a hard time. I was really lucky.

1-00:13:33

**Stine:**

I'm curious; the woman Ruby that helped you so much—

1-00:13:36

**Sousa:**

Ruby Bryant.

1-00:13:37

**Stine:**

Ruby Bryant. Was she somebody that had lived in Richmond, or had migrated here like you had?

1-00:13:43

**Sousa:**

I have no idea, but her nieces were from the Midwest, so I don't know. She was smart. She was an older woman, but real estate, she really knew what she was doing.

1-00:13:59

**Stine:**

For that time too. I'm also curious if once you guys got your house, if you ever had any boarders or had anybody stay with you.

1-00:14:11

**Sousa:**

Well, yes. Then my husband's family came, so we had his sister and his brother-in-law and their little girl lived with us. The husband was stationed at Mare Island. He was in the Navy. You know, you do what you can. It worked out good because I didn't like to cook—still don't—and she was a good cook, so that part worked out good.

1-00:14:50

When I worked in the shipyards, mostly I was in this big room. We all had these tables and had to sit upon the stools and all that stuff, but now and again I got to go with the maritime inspectors onto the ship, and so I would wear a hard hat like everybody had to, and I had the clipboard. We'd go to different areas on the ship and they'd say "Now, this has to be changed." Sometimes it was just small, small changes like if they put the wrong size bolt in something and if it stuck out, it was a danger for somebody to get hurt on it. So they'd say that has to be changed, so on the blueprint you would have to say the right-sized bolt. A lot of picky little things, but that's how you put a puzzle together.

1-00:15:44

**Stine:**

Everybody had their own piece that they were working on.

1-00:15:48

**Sousa:**

There were people that worked on just electrical. There were symbols for the electric. As I remember, they were a round circle with a cross at the middle and that indicated a plug. Some people just work on electrical stuff, some just on the plumbing. You had to show on your blueprints with dotted lines what was overhead or underneath. Sometimes it would be three different views of this particular thing so you could tell what it would really look like. You had to be alert enough to visualize what you were doing, what you were drawing. Even from written instructions you had to use your head.

1-00:16:41

**Stine:**

Did you feel like the training that you had got at U.C. Berkeley was immediately applicable to what you were doing on the ship?

1-00:16:49

**Sousa:**

Oh, absolutely. Yes. When I say I worked on blueprints, the blueprint is the actor product, because actually you are drawing on the thin paper with pencil. I don't know what it is, the process that makes the background blue and the pencil lines white. When I say blueprints, I don't know what you call them, the others. I do have my small drafting tools. I still have those, which kind of surprises me in a way because they're acrylic or plastic or something. I didn't realize; a lot of things you take for granted, but that's almost 60 years ago that they had acrylics and plastics. If you go to a store now, it's the same tools. So they haven't changed.

1-00:17:47

**Stine:**

That would be great to look at them and maybe get them on the video, see what those are like.

1-00:17:55

**Sousa:**

Along the way, I lost my blueprint and I lost my T-square, but then I had a large family and moved. Sometimes things just get lost.

1-00:18:08

**Stine:**

I wonder if you could give us a sense of what it was like to be in the shipyards. I know you said you worked in a large room set up with tables. If you could maybe give us a sense of what that space was like and what your other co-workers?

1-00:18:29

**Sousa:**

It was busy. Although we were sitting at tables, all of us, there was an upbeat feeling. There was not a depressed feeling. I mean, we were building ships to send guys off to war and that could have been very depressing, if you let it, if you felt that way. But it was an upbeat group of people. You had us really young ones, but you had the established draftsmen and you had the others in between. A lot of people had been pulled from other jobs in that field, to give their attention to the engineering part of it. They had office pools, just like they have now. One time, the whole group of us—like I said, I was pretty young—but they went over to a nightclub and I went with them. [laughs] I really was underage and I shouldn't have, but I think they looked the other way. I didn't drink and I don't drink now, but they looked the other way. We were all necessary. We were all necessary, in some way. It was a group that got along well. I don't know

of any tension, but then I go back and think I was 17, 18 years old. What did I know about tension?

1-00:20:02

**Stine:**

Were there other women working in the drafting job?

1-00:20:05

**Sousa:**

Oh, yes. Mostly. The young ones were, mostly. The men that worked there, they were either deferred or 4F. Some, like the major people who were the draftsmen in this other room, they were specialized. I think that they were given a different classification; they were necessary to the war effort, so they didn't have to go. But they were great guys; they gave me a surprise baby shower. The funniest thing is that I had knitted—this goes back, we didn't have the nice Pampers or anything like that that babies have. You had either rubber, and I mean real rubber pants that you put on babies, or you had these things called soakers. It was made of wool, looked like a diaper, and it was in a triangle. I had completed one of those and took it to show it off the day—how they must have laughed. Then at lunchtime they surprised me. They had a cake, they had all of these presents and stuff. It was just delightful. I worked until I was eight months pregnant, until I couldn't easily get my leg up on that first step on the Key System bus, which was kind of high off the ground. On the buses, until late in my maternity, when a tired-looking guy had a seat in the bus, you didn't expect him to get up and give you the seat. Chivalry kind of died during that time, but it was understandable. People worked really physical labor, which I didn't feel that I did. I felt that they deserved a seat if they got there first. Sometimes I apologized to my sister because I know that my sisters had to drag heavy lines, they wore these leather clothes which were heavy, and carried all this equipment. I mean they did hard physical work.

When I said the family came down, eventually my dad got transferred to Camp Stoneman which is out here by Pittsburg. So the rest of the family came down into my sister's little house, briefly before they all moved out. But during that time, my mother decided she wanted to do something, too. Her three daughters were already working and she decided she wanted to, so someone told her if she joined the Painters Union, it was a good job. She had a difficult time. First of all, she was already a grandmother and she was a woman. They didn't want women in the unions. My two sisters had a very difficult time getting in the unions. They were early people. My mother did, too. It took her three tries at this hiring hall. The first time she showed up like ladies did in the '40s with her hat and her gloves and her trim little suit. Well, working on the shipyards—[laughs] so the third time she showed up with a bandana around her head and my brother's jean jacket on, shoved her hands in her pockets and said she wanted a job. She got hired. Her first job, she says they gave her a bucket of red lead paint, sent her down into the hold, which is the lowest portion on the ships, to paint. And she promptly spilled it, so she was in the doghouse from the start. So she never did much painting, but they needed someone to go before the spray painter group, which were all women and they all wore these white coveralls. She would go before them. She was a taper, and she would tape off the areas they didn't want painted, like the brass plates and that stuff. She was always on her hands and knees taping off areas. In fact, there's a movie, I don't know if you've seen it, about the building of the Richmond shipyards. It's about an hour long, but it shows the building of it from the mud flats to what they did, and on the ship. It shows my mother in one of these clips. She and another woman are down their hands and knees, taping off the areas. Actually, she worked longer than the rest of us. When I was pregnant, then I worked a full year and then I quit; then my sister Margie got married and then she got pregnant and then she quit; then my sister Phyllis, she was married, but her husband had an asthma problem around here, so they went to Texas. She actually worked at Todd Houston shipyards in

Texas, which was a different experience and I hope that you get to interview her, because my sister has stories to tell. She really typifies a Rosie.

1-00:26:02

**Stine:**

So I wonder, did you feel fortunate to have a job that wasn't involving such hard labor? When you went into this class at U.C. Berkeley, in your head did you know that you were probably going to be working for the shipyards?

1-00:26:19

**Sousa:**

Yes, that was explained by the art class teacher that we would be. I was just happy that I could do something towards the war effort. During that time, women didn't go into careers unless you were going to be a nurse or a teacher or something along that line. There were secretarial schools, and stuff like that, but generally speaking the goal was to get married. So I was happy that I had a job, that I could do something. 'Course, I did get married, but I was happy that apparently I had talent in one way. People have talent in other ways, so that was mine.

1-00:27:18

**Stine:**

Since most women didn't have jobs going into the war, and then they did have these defense jobs, I wonder what you did with your newfound income? I know you said you put it towards the down payment of your house but before that happened and before you had gotten married, did you have anything that you put your money towards?

1-00:27:43

**Sousa:**

I was married in high school. Actually, my sisters were supporting me. It's a family thing; you just did. Then when I got married, I got an allotment. My husband was mostly stationed close by and he had his income, so I could save my allotment. That's why that went towards a house. I've always been a homeowner, since I was 18 years old. That was necessary for me. My sister said the first thing she did with her first check was to buy some fancy underwear, but I can't remember what I bought. I do know that the first shoe store, you had to have a token or coupon for shoes. My mother was still in Oregon, so I sent her mine so she could buy me wooden shoes, which actually had a wooden sole, but they had the leather on the bottom and the leather on the top. That's how I spent my first shoe coupon.

1-00:29:00

**Stine:**

Can you explain the shoe coupon a little bit? Was it a coupon that you would take to the department store?

1-00:29:08

**Sousa:**

It's not all clear in my mind, but we had coupons and tokens for sugar, for meat, various things, and the shoes. You couldn't get material, you couldn't get fabric to sew, I always sewed things. There were shortages, definitely, but it was all for the servicemen. When I got my house and began cooking and stuff, you would save the drippings off of the meat, if you got meat. You would save all of the fat and take it to the butcher and turn it in there. You'd save it in a can or something. I guess that went towards ammunition or something; I'm not sure. I have a cookbook that has a section in there, blue pages, how you can substitute things. For sugar, you'd use syrup and things like that. That's how I learned to cook, as much as I do. [laughs]

1-00:30:15

**Stine:**

You had to get creative.

1-00:30:17

**Sousa:**

Yes. There were all kinds of shortages, but we knew why. People accept a lot of things. If we could help in some way bring the guys back. The shoes, because the leather was used for the military, they really had to have the shoes, the boots. We understood that. Then, of course when you think of leather, my sisters as welders had to wear these outfits, these pants that were full leather and the jackets. It was to protect them from the welding had some sort of rays that they were not supposed to get exposed to. But that was men and women. Every welder had to wear leathers. So I was not only lucky, but I was grateful that I could sit in an office. But the days that it was really nice— if you've lived around here, we don't always have good days consistently. But to be able to take my lunch and go out there and sit on the dock, it was really something to go outside. They had box lunches, and I'll never forget the smell. I don't know, it just had a distinctive smell, which wasn't bad. You'd open up this box and they have a sandwich, a full lunch you could buy for a small amount. Small amount of money now, but it was okay then. When I didn't take my lunch from home, it was nice to have those. I just remember going in on a shift change, because I worked a regular day, from 8 to 5 I guess it was. When you to go in there, there's thousands of thousands of people. All of us had to have a badge. To get in there you had to be able to be identified. All these hard hats and all the different people with determination on their faces that they were going to go do the job.

1-00:32:50

**Stine:**

Did you ever have a chance to see any of your family when you were at the shipyards, or was it just so busy that you just—

1-00:32:57

**Sousa:**

No, they worked on different yards. Phyllis worked in Pre-fab and Marge worked in Yard Two. My mother worked various shipyards on the painting crew. Of course, I worked at Yard Three, which still exists. That was something, to watch a launching, because they were built in basins. It was different. When it was considered done, then they'd let the water in from the bay, slowly they'd let it in to fill the space and then you'd see all this debris that was down at the bottom, rising up. But when it popped free from those supports, then you knew it was more or less launched. We all cheered because it was an accomplishment. Then they'd open up the gates like the Panama Canal and would go out into the bay and do a shakedown cruise to see that everything worked, the engine worked, all the pumps and everything, worked. When they would come back in, if they had a broom up on the top that meant it was a clean sweep and it had passed.

1-00:34:21

**Stine:**

A signal to everybody?

1-00:34:23

**Sousa:**

Yes.

1-00:34:28

**Stine:**

Your family migrated down from Oregon. Did your husband's family come from anywhere else, or were they from California?

1-00:34:35

**Sousa:**

No, he was from Omaha, Nebraska. His sister Dorothy and her family lived with us and he had a sister Agnes, who lived in Alameda. Her husband was in the Navy. They lived in the basement of a Victorian house. The windows were up at eye level. They lived in the basement, but they were really grateful to have a place to stay that they could be together. Those were the only ones that came out from Omaha. But lots of voices; it's the first Oklahoma accents—in fact, I have a friend that I worked with later on. I was a school bus driver for handicapped kids, and I worked with this woman for 12 years. When they dedicated the park, they had everybody sign in and I heard her voice, which is Okie. I said, “Maudie! What are you doing here?” She said, “I worked at the shipyards.” She worked at the same shipyards I did. And of course, everybody was working there, but what a coincidence. But we had never talked about it. My kids knew very little about it. It was part of my youth. I didn't consider it worthy of this, it was just part of growing up. Everybody did what they could during those years. It was normal to help with the defense work. Anyway, we've rekindled our acquaintanceship through this Rosie program. But she was born in Oklahoma. She's been out here since the 40s, but she still talks like she just migrated. I was lucky. I came on a Greyhound bus. Everybody traveled by Greyhound bus. Richmond had a Greyhound bus station that was so busy, you just can't believe it. People all the time came in by train. The Kaiser people went back to recruit workers but they hadn't provided enough housing, so that was really a struggle. But they did eventually, and some of it still exists. Atchison Village was built during that time. It was a busy time. Downtown, you can't really imagine. We had big department stores. We had Macy's down there, we had Penny's, we had an Albert's department store. A Kress's 5 and 10 cent store, the National Dollar Store. It was just busy, busy, busy. The banks were booming. So it's been hard to see it decline. I still get confused—it was always 10th Street to me, but now I guess it's Harbor Way. 14th Street is now Marina Way, but they're always 10th and 14th to me. [laughs]

1-00:38:21

**Stine:**

So walking around downtown Richmond during that time, there were people coming from all over the country. I just wondered what kind of people that you worked with, or people in your neighborhood, where all they came from. I know a lot of people came from Oklahoma, Nebraska, out there. I know a lot of people came from the South, also. I wondered if you could talk little bit about that, if you had friends that came from far reaches or interactions with different people?

1-00:38:49

**Sousa:**

Actually, I tried to keep my high school friends, and I've since lost track. But people were from all over, and in fact in our community we didn't have any black people. So it was kind of a revelation to see all the black people. I imagine it was the same for them. People were still segregated when this all happened. At the shipyards, they were not segregated. You had crews that had everybody of every color. One of the ladies said that she was sitting there, eating lunch, and this black man sitting by her said, “This would have never happened in the South,” that he could sit there and they were joking around and stuff. It was a different atmosphere, which is probably hard for you to even imagine. They had some hard times, because it was hard for them to join the union. In fact, my sister Phyllis was told when she applied, “We don't take women and

we don't take blacks.” That was it. That was the Boilermakers. They did, but I understand that they had a separate union for black people, which is dumb. If people can do the same work, they should get the same wages and the same privileges and pay the same dues. [laughs] If you're going to pay the same dues, you should have an equal everything. I don't remember any problems, racial-wise. I don't remember anything at all, but you've got to remember I was only 17 or 18 years old and sometimes your head is in the clouds. Newly married, and things were different. I suppose older people saw things differently than I did, but I was really young at the time. It was an exciting time.

1-00:41:17

**Stine:**

Did you ever feel like you were a newcomer coming to a new place? Did you ever feel that people who had lived here their whole lives had any kind of feelings towards all these new people from different states, during the war? I know after the war there might have been different feelings, also.

1-00:41:38

**Sousa:**

You know, I never thought of it. It just never entered my mind. I suppose they resented it in a way, yet it made Richmond grow. But a lot of people like to keep things always the same, so I imagine there was some resentment, but gosh, it was a busy, busy town. So if you resented them coming, you would resent having to stand in a long line for things that you've been able to get before, but I never heard any of that.

1-00:42:22

**Stine:**

When you first came down here, what was maybe your biggest surprise or the biggest difference from Oregon?

1-00:42:34

**Sousa:**

I came down and I don't know if you've been up the highway to Rodeo, came through there at night on a Greyhound bus. I thought I was in San Francisco. All of those lights on top of—I had to ask somebody, “is this San Francisco?” I mean, it was so many lights. Going to San Francisco that was just your mouth hung open. [laughs] Cable cars and—. It just was overwhelming. To have a car, to get to go— They had the Key System and—this really goes back—they had trains that went across the bridge. On the lower portion were trains, but you had to transfer. We'd go on a bus from here and then into Berkeley, and that's where you'd get the train that would take you into San Francisco. You knew it was going to take time and your life was just geared that way. You didn't resent it. Nowadays we want to jump in the car and everybody wants their own car and everybody wants to go where they want to go, when they want to go. But when you relied on the bus, it was a different atmosphere. Everybody was riding the buses to get anywhere. There was a ferry from —The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge wasn't there, so you had to take the ferry. My husband was born in Richmond, so he was saying that if you were over in Marin County and you didn't catch that last ferry you had to go all the way up to Vallejo and around that way, over the Carquinez to come back, so it was quite a ways out of your way, so it was good to be there waiting for the ferry.

1-00:44:46

**Stine:**

Did you have any first impressions of the city of Richmond when you first got here? Did you have impressions coming here, since your sister was already down here and she told you what it was like?

1-00:45:01

**Sousa:**

She told me what it was like. Actually, when I came on the bus I came with a family and we went to San Francisco first.

[tape interruption]

1-00:45:33

**Stine:**

So I had asked you about your sister, if she had given you any impressions of Richmond, or let you know what it was going to be like when you got down here.

1-00:45:40

**Sousa:**

Not too much. She was a mother with a child. She will tell you her story, or someone else will, but she was content just to be a homemaker. Her husband was in another business, he and his buddy. They were riding in the car, the two couples, and the two guys decided that they would learn to be welders. So she says, "I want to, too. I want to do it too." So he was a little disturbed about that. He couldn't take it that she was not only doing the same job that he was, but getting the same pay. So the marriage broke up because of it. He couldn't handle it.

1-00:47:03

**Stine:**

During that time, during the war?

1-00:47:05

**Sousa:**

Men had to face different things. There was a stereotype of what the man's job was and what the women's job was, was to stay home and have the kids and raise the kids. I was lucky enough that I got to do that, before I went to work in my later years. I got to see all my kids go off to school and be here when they got home. But a lot of women didn't and certainly don't now. My daughters all work. But that was expected of them. It wasn't expected of me to go to work or my sister to go to work. We did because the war was on. Nowadays things have changed and women are equal, even if they're still not getting the same pay in some things. If I were still a draftsman, I would expect to get the same pay as those who were trained the same. That's only right.

1-00:48:15

It was different times then. San Francisco was the golden place to go to, but you always dressed up, always wore your best when you went over there. It was kinda funny. There was a store there that was supposed to be pretty high-class, called the Emporium. It disintegrated into something else, but at one time it was really *the* store to go to. When my mother stopped working at the shipyards, she became a clerk there at the Emporium in San Francisco and worked there 27 years. She moved over there and she became the career woman. *She* became the career woman, which when you think about it, was kind of strange. The rest of us, we just had our families and started having our children.

1-00:49:27

**Stine:**

I wondered if your mom's decision to do that had any influence on you? What did you think about that, her working?

1-00:49:38

**Sousa:**

No, this was her thing. My dad had passed away and it was a different life for her now. We were all grown enough. So she became a career woman, had her little apartment in San Francisco, took Arthur Murray dancing classes and went on cruises, went to Reno to gamble. Why not? It was great for her, where we were homemakers raising our kids. Different kind of a grandma. [laughs]

1-00:50:19

**Stine:**

I want to just jump back a little bit. Your sister had a child when you came down here, so you were doing babysitting for her. When you had a child, I was wondering in both cases if you had any day care or how that worked out, especially in your sister's case when you stopped babysitting and started working.

1-00:50:44

**Sousa:**

When I left, there were other people there that could help with the babysitting but eventually when everybody got their own places, she had another family living with her that had a child the same age as her son. They were very grateful to have a place to live, until they went to Texas. But for myself, I was a mother and I had my own home, so that's what I did. I was a mother and a homemaker. I used to do a lot of sewing, in fact, I still play around with it. But fabric was very hard to get and I remember the first material that I could buy was left over from before the war and it was men's shirting material, and it was white with brown stripes in it. I made look-alike dresses for my daughter and myself by hand, but at least it was something new. I was happy to find material again. We did okay with shortages and things. We had to, and we accepted that. But childcare, Kaiser developed their own system in the child development centers, which went—some of them— day and night because of the shifts. They were always packed. My younger sister, for a while, was in childcare. She was a little older; she wasn't a baby. She was seven or something like that.

1-00:52:42

**Stine:**

This was after your mom had moved down?

1-00:52:45

**Sousa:**

Yes. My mom went to work, and so she would go to the childcare. But she said she hated it because they would put cod liver oil in the oatmeal. They wouldn't just give it to you, they'd put it in the oatmeal, she said. Hated that. But you know, it was the first childcare for the workers, which I think now they're starting to do that, some companies. I think it's a great idea. Makes the mother feel a lot better to know her child is close by. They're finally realizing that women can do equal jobs in most fields, but they also are mothers and they should have childcare, like they did during the war years. Sometimes you wonder what the government's thinking.

1-00:53:59

**Stine:**

I'm curious also to know about all the changes that happened in Richmond. You were a newcomer when you came here so you don't have an idea of what it was like before the war, but I know that things must have really changed a lot when the end of the war came. There were all these new people here, and all these jobs that had been defense jobs were all of a sudden no longer. You were no longer working in the shipyards, but I wonder if you had a sense of people planning and knowing that there would be an inevitable end, or if it was just kind of the rug pulled out from underneath people?

1-00:54:36

**Sousa:**

I think it was the rug pulled out from under people. Not only women, but all of the industries that Richmond was known for— I mean, we had four shipyards going here. Of course, the women were laid off first so that the men could come back and take those jobs, but there wasn't a need to build ships anymore. So a lot of unemployment—my husband was lucky enough to have a skill, he was a carpenter. He got a job right away when he came out of the service, so we weren't affected, but a lot of people were. It took a while. I wasn't involved in government, or how the city ran. I'm still the mindset was a homemaker, so a lot of this stuff didn't involve me or I wasn't involved with it, so I couldn't answer some of your questions.

1-00:55:51

**Stine:**

I guess from your perspective then, still being a resident of Richmond, what kind of effects did you see in downtown, or just in your day-to-day, going shopping.

1-00:56:03

**Sousa:**

I still had to take the bus. I was a late-learner to drive. You would not believe I was in my 30's before I learned to drive, and when I learned to drive a new me emerged. I think that was the most liberating thing that ever happened to me, was to learn to drive, because that changed my life. Independence, you know. I had five children before I learned to drive. But I was still dependent on the buses to go everywhere. I had three children by then. A lot of the doctors moved away, because the business wasn't there. Businesses started to close downtown and the big department stores; one would go and then another would go. It was really sad. Of course the people; a lot of them left. A lot of the people that had moved from the Midwest went back. I don't know if people from the South, I know a lot of the people, I heard left, as soon as their jobs were over, they left to go back to where they were from. But a lot of them came back because that first winter, wherever they were, they decided California was the place for them. They came back. But economically, I just wasn't affected. I'm sure there was a dramatic downturn.

1-00:57:54

**Stine:**

You were affected in the sense that your doctor was farther away then, and were you not necessarily going downtown as much as you had before?

1-00:58:03

**Sousa:**

Right. We were able to buy a car after the war, but it was a little Model A, funny little thing. A real oldie, but gee, to have wheels, it just made a big difference. I still didn't drive, but then we got a car. We never had a new one; they were always older cars. At that time, we had moved and we had another house. This one also had a side yard; it was a 25-foot lot. This home was built by

a carpenter, so it had a lot of refinements. It had the first walk-in closet I had ever seen. It was very nice. He'd built it for himself, but then his wife got sick and he had to sell it. Ruby Bryant once again found it for us. She came over one day and she says, "You don't want to live here anymore, do you? I found another house for you. Well, actually, I found someone who wants to buy your house." So okay— so this one cost me \$4200, but it was much nicer. I mean, it had hardwood floors; it was a really, really nice house. But yes, Ruby was still looking out for me. So we moved, but we were more closer to a bus line, and where I could walk to the store. It was difficult, when I think now, not being able to drive. It really limits you. Once I learned to drive, my whole life changed. I mean, really. I took the kids camping, driving mountain roads. I learned to drive at the adult school, at night and in the rain, and I was fearless. I still am. [laughs] Then I started driving as a volunteer for the Red Cross, taking families to Letterman Hospital or to Oak Knoll Hospital, for their medical visits. I had a weekly job where kids at the junior high school would give up their lunch time to go play with these kids that that was at the {Christina Cameron School} for the handicapped, and so I would drive them in this big station wagon and take them down there. They would have their lunch hour playing with these kids. That's when I met some school bus drivers that brought the kids in, and eventually that's when I decided that I would do that. This job, I got paid for. Red Cross was volunteer. So I worked taking handicapped kids to school and back home. I did that for 12 years.

1-01:01:23

**Stine:**

Was that while your kids were still at home?

1-01:01:25

**Sousa:**

Yes. My youngest, I guess was still in high school, so that's when I did that. It was exacting; it was hard work. I worked 12 years doing that and I was driving as far as Martinez to pick up kids and into Crockett, stuff like that. It just got to be too much, about a hundred miles a day I was driving, and your day was chopped up. You had a morning route, you had a noon route, and you had an afternoon route. The most aggravating thing was when the parents wouldn't be home, because these kids always had to be dropped with someone. When the parents weren't home, it got so you had to keep them on the bus, had to take them back, it made your other routes late. So they had a policy that they had to take them back to the yard and they called the police. So it was kind of bad. My early years, I dealt with kids who had Down's syndrome and didn't talk. Heartbreaking cases. Loving parents, and it's so frustrating to deal with these children that you know would never grow up to be productive adults. It was sad. There were some nice times, too. I took turns with these kids and they'd get to sit in the front seat. I was working with kids who didn't speak unless you said "repeat." We drove up behind this car and he read the license plate. I hadn't said anything to him, and he read it on his own. Oh boy, jubilation. So there was good times, though. But that was another story, just because I liked to drive, and I still like to drive.

1-01:03:39

**Stine:**

I'm going to jump backwards just a little bit. When you first came here, you were sixteen or seventeen?

1-01:03:50

**Sousa:**

Sixteen.

1-01:03:52

**Stine:**

So before you met your husband, I wonder if you could give me an idea of what it was like to be a teenager away from home and in this new place, if you felt a sense of excitement or something?

1-01:04:03

**Sousa:**

Oh yes, definitely. Came on the Greyhound bus. First of all I lived in Seaside, which was a summer resort town. There was a leisurely atmosphere to that. I came down here and there was an energy. I just felt an energy that everybody seemed to have, even the women that stayed home. I mean it was all involved. There was these war industries, there was things to do here. It was exciting, and that's when I first started going to the dances that they had downtown, on 10th and Macdonald, just off of Macdonald. It was called {Schwartz Ballroom}.

1-01:04:56

**Stine:**

Did they have live music?

1-01:04:57

**Sousa:**

Yes. That's when we did the jitterbug, stuff like that. The good songs, Harry James— when you heard horns, you really heard the horns in a band. Good, fast music. It seemed to me that the music was really jivey and made you happy and jump around, or else it was real dreamy and slow. But one thing about the music at that time is you understood the words. Everybody could sing to those words; everybody knew the words to all the songs. You just did. We had radio. Of course, there was no TV. I think TV has been the downfall— I'm sure it's educational, but it just gobbles your time and there's a lot of garbage on there. But music was really upbeat and kept your spirits up.

1-01:06:11

**Stine:**

Did you meet your husband at a dance?

1-01:06:14

**Sousa:**

No, I met him because his buddy's parents lived down the street. Of course, my dad was in the Army, so I was used to Army uniforms. I was not used to Navy uniforms. The Navy uniforms, they always looked so smart with their hats. Cocky, you know, and swaggering. It was a time where young people gravitate towards young people. They stopped by when I was out in the yard. It was an accident the first time, but not later on. I just happened to be—[laughs] Of course, I never knew when they were coming, but later on I did. No, I met him just when he was in the neighborhood. He would pass by. We thought we had a lot in common; we were both from big families and we thought that was enough. But eventually, it wasn't. We were married for ten years. That's the way it goes. Took a while to learn the differences; he was raised in the Midwest where they had different values. I was raised differently than he was, with an independent streak. That upsets some of the men, I guess.

1-01:07:55

**Stine:**

Things were definitely shifting around a lot.

1-01:07:57

**Sousa:**

Yes, and then the fact that I could do something, I did go to school, did go to work in the shipyards as the draftsman and was earning money. That was fine, because I was able to save the allotment check and we got our house and stuff, but there were other differences. At that time, when you failed in a marriage, you really felt you failed. Nowadays, a divorce is so easy to get, but then I felt like a real failure. But you have to do what you have to do. Change the subject. [laughs]

1-01:08:47

**Stine:**

Okay. Just going back to things you did in your free time, you said you went to movies and dances. Were there other teenagers around? Because it seems like there was a big influx of teenagers or young people in Richmond at that time.

1-01:09:08

**Sousa:**

Not until I went to high school. That's when I met all the gang, but I was in a difficult position because by that time I was engaged. I couldn't fully get involved, but we would go to baseball games, a group of us girls. It was all a group thing, and that was fine. Going to the baseball games, to the movies and to the dances, but it was a group of girls that would go. But like I said, I was kind of betwixt and between. I was a teenager, yet I was engaged.

1-01:09:57

**Stine:**

There must have been other girls in that same—

1-01:09:59

**Sousa:**

Yes, I got married in January '43. There were several girls that were married and were continuing their education to get our high school diploma. Just one of them was expecting. Of course, we wore cap and gowns and nobody knew that. She was always afraid that she would be picked out and doggone it, if they did forget to call her name. They told us if they forget your name, step in back of the curtain and they'll call you in the next group. So this poor gal— but nobody knew, except I did. It was kind of funny. But yes, there were several married girls in the class.

1-01:10:56

**Stine:**

During your first couple years of marriage, did you feel like you had a real support network of other women that were in the same situation?

1-01:11:05

**Sousa:**

No, my husband was kind of isolating me from others, so a lot of friendships got dropped during that time. But then, I was eighteen years old and I had my first baby when I was 18. They were still doing teenage stuff. I had a home; my obligations were home and family. I had to grow up and leave my girlhood behind, I guess you have to say. Once he was out of the service, it was a different story. It was traditional.

1-01:11:58

**Stine:**

At the end of the war, you felt like things were, at least for you, going back to maybe how they would've been before.

1-01:12:05

**Sousa:**

Yes. That's what we expected. None of us ever expected to have a career. The guys signed up for a hitch in the service, and that's what we did. We signed up for a time when our country needed us, just like the guys did. We went back to what we did before, and that's what we expected. Although there were women who needed to keep their jobs, there were a lot that needed to do that, older people supporting kids. When you think of people who came from the South, especially black women that were supporting children, they needed to keep their jobs. That's the way it was.

1-01:13:03

**Stine:**

Maybe we can start talking a little bit about right after the war. Maybe you can run us through what was like starting a family, what an average day for you might have been once you had had your first child and your home, the things you were doing there.

1-01:13:23

**Sousa:**

I had my sister-in-law that was living with me then, and so she took over a lot of the household duties. In fact, because I didn't like to cook—and I still do not like to cook—she took on all of those responsibilities. She was living there rent-free, so— Saving her allotment check for her house that she got when they went back to Omaha. I had done that; my sister had taken care of me until I had income, so that's what she did. So my days were mostly devoted to taking care of Janice. I knit socks for the Red Cross, I did that. Kind of a funny story: I wanted to still help out if I could, so they gave me the yarn and the instructions and the needles. I had made socks before, and I would do them on four little needles. When you turned the heel it was very intricate to turn the heel. Well, these were tube socks. The instructions said do it this way, and I thought this has got to be wrong. So I completed this pair of socks took them in, and they said, “No, no. These are tube socks and the spirals are supposed to go around and around, so they'll fit any size feet.” What I had done is to have the ribs go straight up, so it kind of limited the size of the foot. I had to rip those things all out and do it right. I was so embarrassed. So, when in doubt, follow directions. [laughs] I learned to knit when I was quite young. In fact, my first project was a skirt. It's unraveled, and I still have some of the yarn, just for a keepsake. So I knit socks, and I knit sweaters and all kinds of stuff. So these socks were going to be a breeze. [laughs] But they weren't.

1-01:15:53

**Stine:**

It sounds like you really did want to take on this kind of a role of contributing towards defense, and then later in life driving the bus, still involving community service. Right after the war you started doing knitting for the Red Cross; what were some other things that you were doing?

1-01:16:15

**Sousa:**

I can't really remember. This is a long time ago and a lot of children later. I've always been patriotic; my whole family has been. Maybe it's because of my dad being a career army man, but we all were. My dad would play in the band, parades and stuff. We always went to parades, was here when Richmond celebrated its 50th anniversary as a town. Dressed up in cowboy outfits and went downtown. Always participated in things like that, parades. Not involved, but on the sidelines.

1-01:17:16

**Stine:**

How long did you live in Richmond before you moved to El Sobrante, or was there anywhere in between?

1-01:17:21

**Sousa:**

Well, technically I could say I'm still in Richmond—

1-01:17:24

**Stine:**

Yeah, we noticed driving here.

1-01:17:27

**Sousa:**

Because the ZIP code is the same, but I just say El Sobrante now. I consider Richmond downtown, down there. We're borderline here. So I've always lived here.

1-01:17:47

**Stine:**

Do you still do your shopping downtown?

1-01:17:51

**Sousa:**

Well, there is no downtown.

1-01:17:53

**Stine:**

I know.

1-01:17:55

**Sousa:**

I seldom go down there. I go down now, because Kaiser Hospital is there. There's a nice museum. If you get a chance to see the museum— it's only open on special days. It's an old Carnegie library, built by Andrew Carnegie, so it's a nice old building. It was the library during the time that Richmond was going and during the war years, but now it's a museum. But no, I don't shop downtown. There is no downtown. I don't even take the Del Norte. I like to drive on the freeway, and it's easier for me to go down to the Del Norte station than is to go to Richmond. I don't do anything downtown, just go through it. In fact, now that we have the Richmond Parkway, which is right up here at this next off ramp, to go to San Rafael, I take that. So in another way, I avoid Richmond again. Used to go down Barrett Avenue, and then— There are dangerous parts of the town. I don't go looking for trouble.

1-01:19:27

**Stine:**

And your children do any of them live in Richmond or El Sobrante, around here?

1-01:19:33

**Sousa:**

Our youngest son lives in El Sobrante; another daughter in Martinez; another daughter in Rohnert Park, which is by Santa Rosa; another daughter in Sacramento. They're all close by. I have one little granddaughter; all the rest of them are all grown. In fact, the youngest of the other crop is 18 now. She's six and a half, so she came along— she has no cousins her own age and it's kind of

sad, but that's the way it is. My son's daughter. Lucky to have her. I have nine grandchildren and I have five great-grandchildren.

1-01:20:36

**Stine:**

And are they all around here, for the most part?

1-01:20:38

**Sousa:**

No. One in Phoenix, Arizona; and the other in Cheyenne, Wyoming; and another one up above Santa Rosa, a little town up there, which I forgot. I don't get to see them that often. I get to see Kylie, my youngest one because she lives here in El Sobrante, but the others are too far away. They did come out to see the memorial last year. That was a treat. In fact, one of the granddaughters, which I visited in June, her sister and family went down to visit them, but I didn't realize they were bringing them out. So I was to meet them all down at the memorial, and there she was. I was just stunned that they brought her, too. My two granddaughters were there—well, you'd have to see by the picture, because it's a group. They hired a van and drove out. It was very nice.

1-01:21:48

**Stine:**

That's another question I have for you, and you kind of alluded to it earlier, but you had mentioned you didn't tell your children all that much about the war. When you did talk to them about it, what kinds of things would you tell them, or would you now, sharing with your grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

**Sousa:**

They're not, "Oh, great that you did this," because that's how I treated it. I mean, I specifically didn't do anything that was that great, but I participated in something that was great. That's how I tried to let them feel, too, that I was part of this movement to get the war over and I did what I was capable of doing. No, they don't say, "Oh great, Grandma, that you were a draftsman." No, that didn't faze 'em, and that's how I treated it, too. I did my little job that I could do. Didn't have to carry a gun or I didn't have to carry a rivet gun or I didn't have to weld, but I did what was needed, helped in my way. I was part of the group of women who got in there to do jobs that men ordinarily did, but they were needed to fight.

1-01:23:30

**Wheelock:**

I just wanted to ask, how did you feel about the difference between your job and your sisters' jobs at the time? Because you said you apologized—

1-01:23:40

**Sousa:**

At the time I was a teenager and I was just glad to have a job. But it sunk in later, because I've heard a lot of stories. But she never talked about how hard it was, either. Phyllis and Marge were both welders, and they never talked about how hard it was. It was, "We did a job that needed to be done," and nobody griped about it, but later on, now I'm thinking, they had to be out in his terrible weather. Mom said later first of all, they didn't have work clothes for women. They had to wear men's clothes. Here, no one thought of having long underwear. This was California. So it would be so cold that my mother said she would wrap Ace bandages around her legs just to keep them warm, because she was down on her hands and knees on the deck of the ships in the

rain, sun, wind, cold. When I think of that, that was a hardship, but they never complained about it at the time. It's because it was a job and it needed to be done. They never talked about it. My sisters never talked about the job, and my mother didn't either. They just did it. It was part of those years and didn't think that it was anything special, because everybody was doing that kind of work. Every woman who was capable was doing that kind of work. I don't know if we were a different kind of family, or if we thought about it differently, or what. That's the way it was.

1-01:25:49

**Stine:**

When your mom came down to work, did you get the sense that she really did this out of a sense of obligation or a sense of patriotism or duty, rather than necessarily needing to have the paycheck? Or was it a combination?

1-01:26:02

**Sousa:**

It was a combination. She was part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary and she was very patriotic. The fact that my father had passed away by then, she needed to have a job, too. It's a combination of everything, but the fact that she could do it—she said she was very, very proud of the fact that she only got spray-painted once. [laughs] So she knew you had to keep so far ahead of that gang. If you lagged behind then you got sprayed. But she went all over the place, quite a lady. She lived to be a hundred years old. When we filled out an application to become registered as these “Rosies,” which was requested, had a little form that you filled out of what you did. She wrote this letter of what she did. She was 97 when she wrote it, and she could remember her foreman's name. Beautiful handwriting. We were lucky; she was good up until the last three months. We had this huge birthday party for her 100th birthday and I think she was just holding on until then, because she was already having to be in a wheelchair because she had broken her hip a couple of years before. She was getting weaker and weaker, and it was easier to sit in a wheelchair. In fact, I'll tell you a funny story that has nothing to do with anything, except that when she broke her hip the doctor explained to us— because he had to put a plate and a screw in there— the doctor said, “you know, she may never walk again.” She was 96. We said, “You've got to be kidding! You're talking about our mother, we're going on a cruise to Alaska in two months.” We just told him straight out, you don't know our mother. And we did. Took the fold-up wheelchair and went to Alaska on a cruise.

1-01:28:55

**Stine:**

She sounds like an incredible person.

1-01:28:57

**Sousa:**

She lived in San Francisco much too long, by herself. The traffic got really terrible for us going over there. We were taking her groceries and doing her laundry and doing all this stuff and taking her to the doctor, but she still claimed she was independent. So we warned her, if you get hurt, we're taking you out of here. Anyway, she stumbled into the apartment and broke her hip. So we did the convalescent hospital and all that stuff. In the meantime, before this happened, she was a woman who worked hard for her money and saved it. She could read the financial pages; she was good about that. She was horrified that none of the rest of us girls followed the stock market. She did. So one day she showed me her bankbook. I said, well, what are you going to do with it? She was 95 or 96 and she says “Well, I'm saving it for my old age. I said, “well, mom, I think it's time you do something with it.” I said, “you've always wanted to take a trip to Alaska.” And she said, “Yeah, I have.” She says, “Find us a cruise that leaves from San Francisco and I'll take all of you.” So, being a smart person, within a week—[laughs] We found

this cruise that left from San Francisco, went up to Alaska and came back to San Francisco. So she booked it. She took all five of her kids to Alaska. We would just get her in that wheelchair and she went on this railroad that goes all the way— White Horse, Yukon. It goes from Skagway way up to the Yukon Pass. Went on that, did all kinds of things, so she had a good time. But the doctor says “She may never walk again”—oh no, you don't know my mother.

1-01:31:32

**Wheelock:**

She sounds like she was a very determined woman. I was wondering why did she keep trying with the Painters' Union? Because she went back there to that hall three times, didn't she? They weren't really interested in her at first, was that right?

1-01:31:48

**Sousa:**

Yes.

1-01:31:50

**Wheelock:**

How did that come about that that was what she wanted to do, that specific thing?

1-01:31:52

**Sousa:**

She had talked to other people. See I didn't have a union and my pay was considerably less than the people who belonged to a union. She was smart, moneywise, and she knew that was a good paying job. At that time, she really needed to have a job. That's why she wanted to be in the Painters' Union.

1-01:32:21

**Wheelock:**

As opposed to another job that would've been easier to get?

1-01:32:25

**Sousa:**

First of all, she couldn't have worked as a welder or stuff. That was a very physical job. She knew that she could paint; turned out she didn't do it. Yes, I suppose. She just got painted; she got paint on her. She didn't have to work with dirt and grease; who wants to be a laborer that sweeps? You do that at home. [laughs] She was a very thinking person.

1-01:33:08

**Wheelock:**

Was that a big change for her? You said that at first she came in with the suit and gloves and the hat and all that. By the end, the last time she came in, she was in your brother's jean jacket and wearing pants. Did she just decide that's what she was going to do, or did she think about it?

1-01:33:29

**Sousa:**

The women working all wore bandanas around their head. It was a safety thing, really. She was smart enough to figure out that she had to look the look and walk the walk, if you want the job.

1-01:33:50

**Stine:**

She sounds so influential on all of her daughters.

1-01:33:54

**Sousa:**

I think so.

1-01:33:54

**Stine:**

Is there anything from when you were growing up that you remember?

1-01:33:56

**Sousa:**

I think we all latched on to that, to the independence and the determination that she had. When she went to work at the store, it was another case of another fib. She had lopped off 10 years off of her age. Well, she looked young. So then she had to be square with the Social Security as apparently a lot of people did, but she looked good for her age.

1-01:34:29

**Wheelock:**

When was that when she started working for Emporium?

1-01:34:33

**Sousa:**

I don't remember the year, but it's got to be probably '46.

1-01:34:41

**Wheelock:**

And your father had passed away during the war.

1-01:34:46

**Sousa:**

Yes. She worked there 27 years. She was determined. She had a whole different life when she went to San Francisco. She took Arthur Murray dance lessons and she had these gorgeous long dancing gowns and the shoes— she loved the Latin dances. She was the first woman who went on a cruise to the Caribbean, she went to Hawaii—she got to be an independent woman. First of all, all of us girls were over on this side of the bay and she could be whatever she wanted to be in San Francisco. I'm sure that a lot of people didn't know that she had that many kids. Why tell 'em? She was doing her thing, so good for her.

[end of interview]