

Signe Nakashima (and Barbara Miller)

The Real Rosie The Riveter Project

Interview 10

Interview Conducted by

Anne de Mare & Kirsten Kelly

June 27, 2010

ARRA Convention, Nashville, Tennessee

For The

Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives
Elmer Holmes Bobst Library
New York University

Interview: Signe Nakashima (and Barbara Miller)

Interviewers: Anne de Mare & Kirsten Kelly

Date: June 27, 2010

Place: Nashville, Tennessee

Nakashima: My name is Signe Nakashima. I was born and raised in Nebraska, a little farm near Comstock, Nebraska.

De Mare: And can you tell me a little bit about your childhood?

Nakashima: I was born to a... the most wonderful parents in the world. They were patient. They never yelled at each other. They were good to us kids. They gave us plenty of freedom, but good enough discipline. And I grew up very poor but I didn't know it. I was rich. I had everything I needed.

De Mare: How many were in the family?

Nakashima: Um, older brother and then me and my sister and my younger brother. All within four years. So we grew up together.

De Mare: And what did you father do? What did your father do for a living?

Nakashima: We were on a farm. He was a farmer. He was raised in Sweden. At seventeen he came to this country all by himself, came through Ellis Island, and settled in Nebraska. I don't know why, but land.. lived on a dry land farm.

De Mare: And what did you farm? What did you grow?

Nakashima: Uh, corn and alfalfa, to feed the stock and just whatever we had. We had a potato patch and a big garden and cattle, pigs, chickens.

De Mare: A lot.

Nakashima: A lot of things. A lot of work.

Kelly: I'm getting a lot of glare in her glasses.

De Mare: Okay.

00:01:25:14-----

De Mare: So, uh, so your father was a farmer.

Nakashima: Mm-hm.

De Mare: You said you grew up very poor but you didn't know it.

Nakashima: That's right.

De Mare: Now, could you tell me the story of how you found out about the work during the war? How you got your job and then what you did during the war as a Rosie?

Nakashima: Well, my... I married a high school sweetheart. He was drafted before Pearl Harbor. He was a pre-war, a peacetime draftee. Right after Pearl Harbor his feet swelled, he couldn't walk so that- he could walk but he couldn't march- so they decided he'd be better off in the war work than in military. He came home; we got married. And we wanted to get into defense work, to help win the war. So we moved from Nebraska to California. And I hired into Lockheed Aircraft Corporation as a riveter.

De Mare: How did you... how did you learn about the job?

How did you find out about it? Do you remember?

Nakashima: Yes, his brother had already been in California for a year, and a couple friends, and they talked us into going there. It was a hard move 'cause it was a long ways from home. They said, "You gotta come to California for the big wages, y'know: sixty cents an hour. That was big wages. So we went out and we... we lived in an apartment with them.

De Mare: So you were earning sixty cents an hour as a... as a riveter.

Nakashima: Riveter.

De Mare: And can you explain for some... for someone who doesn't know what riveting is, what it is? What did you actually do?

Nakashima: Well, airplanes are held together a lot with rivets. So you'd drill a hole, put a rivet in, and I ran the rivet gun, and you put, uh, flat-nosed end against the

rivet, and then somebody on the other side put a bucking bar, and you shoot. It was an air gun and it would vibrate, and that would make the rivet squish up from the other side. That was how, what a rivet was and they used a lot of them in airplanes.

00:03:30:02-----

De Mare: And what was your husband do... what?

Kelly: Sorry. See if she could maybe use that...

De Mare: Oh.

Kelly: It is just crinkling.

De Mare: It's crinkling. And she said that... (laughter)

Kelly: It's crinkling, I was like, what is that? It sounds about ten times louder in my ear, so we... we...

De Mare: That's very funny.

Nakashima: I won't crinkle any more.

De Mare: No, no. Don't crinkle any more. Don't crinkle. So, and what did... what did your husband do? He worked at Lockheed as well?

Nakashima: Yes, we hired in together. He was hired in. He was very insulted. They high... hired him in as a filer and burrer. And I was a riveter. I had a big name. But very shortly after, he became a sheet-metal worker, which was fine. He was in the same building but in a different department than I was.

De Mare: And, um, do you... did he make the same amount of money an hour as you?

Nakashima: Yes. Actually, we both a... agreed to work on the swing shift so we got an extra six cents an hour, and swing shift was from four in the afternoon 'til midnight. Then we'd get off at midnight, go to the swing shift movies that lasted 'til about four in the morning. And then, uh, go to work the next day at four pm.

De Mare: What is it... I'm just curious what it was like as a young bride to be starting your life in the middle of this war? Um...

00:04:50:14-----

Nakashima: Well, I'd actually worked since I was fourteen. I had to leave home to go to high school. I'd get jobs to work my way through high school. So I was not just first out of the home, you know, I'd been working for about five years before I went... before I got married.

De Mare: What kind of jobs did you do?

Nakashima: Housework for people, and they would be in town working at the dime store, where I'd liked to have been. And I would do her housework for her, for three dollars a week.

De Mare: Three dollars a week. So sixty cents an hour was a lot of money.

Nakashima: Oh, it was a lot of money.

De Mare: A lot of money.

Nakashima: Mm-hm.

De Mare: Um, did you have any, um, any other family or anyone else in the service other than your husband?

Nakashima: Um, my two brothers. My older brother was in the army air corp, and my younger brother was in the navy, and, uh, cousins and other relatives.

De Mare: And so can you talk a little bit about if you... how you felt connected with the work you were doing to the military?

Nakashima: Oh, definitely. We were building airplanes to fly over and bomb the enemy. I worked on B-17 bombers, P-38 fighters, they were going over there to get the war over so we could bring our boys home. That was the big thing. Everyone said, "Bring the boys home." That was the, besides the victory sign, that was the thing.

De Mare: Do you remember any event that happened when you were working on the floor, any, um, funny thing that happened, or dangerous thing that happened, or tragic thing that happened- just an anecdote of your experience as a Rosie when you were working?

00:06:36:16-----

Nakashima: Well, there were several. We were in the air, uh, corridor of Grand Central Airport, a training field, and I worked on the swing shift. The next day when I came to work, everybody was buzzing with excitement. On the graveyard shift, right after mine, a fella was landing and he accidentally hit the wrong button and he strafed our department. There were holes in toolboxes and workbenches, but I wasn't there. It didn't happen to hit anybody, but when he landed, they said he was white as a sheet and wondered how many people he had killed. It wasn't on my shift but it was pretty exciting.

De Mare: Wow.

Nakashima: Also, we needed to cover all our hair with what we call "snoods". And the song was, "When you were in the mood, wear a snood." And one lady insisted on leaving a little bunch of hair out because she was feminine. She didn't wanna cover her hair. She... we used twelve inch drills and one got away from her and caught her hair and pulled a bunch of hair out. It was quite a bloody mess.

And things like that happened. Accidents. That was the worst one I can think of.

De Mare: Yeah. What was it, um, you mentioned, you know, you were, you wanted to be feminine even though you had to.. Can you talk a little bit about that, about how.. 'Cause it was the first time a lot of women wore pants, and it was the first time.. can you talk about what that was like for you.. you as a young girl?

Nakashima: Well, I may be in a different category. I was on the farm. I wore bib overalls a lot on the farm. But in town, or anywhere we went, ladies had to wear skirts. Here we are having to wear slacks, or coveralls, and it wasn't humiliating, in fact, I felt kind of at home in overalls. But it was kind of hard on some ladies to have to put on men's clothing, you know. That's what they were thought of as.

De Mare: Yeah. When you talk about the relationship between the men and the women at the plant, if, uh... what it was like to work with the men, if you worked mostly with men or mostly with other women? Can you just talk about

that relationship? Because I know it was the first time a lot of people were thrown together in that way to work.

00:09:01:14-----

Nakashima: I think it was pretty much fifty-fifty, as far as men and women- maybe more women than men in our department. But they just blended very well. The men were very good to us. They didn't, uh, act like we were submissive and they were domineering or anything. They were good in my department. I don't know if it was that way in other places.

De Mare: And were there, were there any people of color working there? Was it...

Nakashima: There were some, yes, and, uh, I worked with a Mexican lady. And she said, "You just don't what it's like to have dark skin." She wouldn't feel that way now, but it was pretty, they, she felt discriminated against. I sure didn't feel that way toward them. They were very nice people. Black... a black lady worked in the tool crib, and she was sweet as could be and... They all got along fine.

We didn't... did... 'course, this was in California. It's not in the Deep South or anything like that.

De Mare: Was there a union at the... at the...

Nakashima: Yes.

De Mare: And were you a member of the union?

Nakashima: My husband belonged to the International Machinists Union, and I belonged to the Ladies Auxillary of the International Machinists Union. Yes.

De Mare: And what were the... what... what was... what was it like to... did you have to join the union before you got a job? Can you just talk a little bit about what it was like?

Nakashima: Well, I don't remember much about that. We just belonged. Maybe we signed a piece of paper, I don't know. But I didn't think much about the union. It didn't really have a lot to do with what I did at work.

De Mare: Yeah.

00:10:38:04-----

Nakashima: There were no strikes. Nobody thought of that. This is wartime. Everybody's working. You didn't work for more wages. You worked to get the boys home. So the union didn't really mean a whole lot to us.

De Mare: Um, can you talk a little bit about when the war was over, what happened? If you, you know, once the war ended...

Nakashima: Yes.

De Mare: ...how your work... what happened?

Nakashima: Uh, first we had V.E. day, "Victory in Europe", which was in April, and shortly after I was laid off. Lockheed was starting to reduce their force. I was 'rift', in other words: reduction enforced. And then, uh, I think it was in July, my husband was laid off. So we were through with work at Lockheed. But we had heard about a Navy base opening up on the Mohavi Desert. It started in, in 1943; we got there in 1945. Drove a hundred and fifty

miles up to the desert, and, uh, got there on August 13th, checked into housing, which was a dormitory for me and marine barracks for my husband.

The next day we hired in to work and before noon, and they sat me down to a desk, and everybody left, and I couldn't figure out why, and my boss said, "Aren't you going home?" And I said, "It isn't time to go home yet." She said, "The Japanese just surrendered, and the president just gave us two days off with pay." That was my introduction to my new job. And then, um, eventually on base I became an electronic technician, worked on the bench with the guys, which was very natural to me. I had worked at Lockheed and that opened up the way for me to work on the bench with guys on the base.

De Mare: Do you think that, um, can you talk a little bit about how you think the Rosies going in and taking over that work and doing those jobs while the men were gone, how that changed things for, like, your daughter as she was growing up?

00:12:51:02-----

Nakashima: I think it did a lot to change things for seeing women in the work force, doing men's jobs. When I got to Lockheed, I don't think they thought women really could do this work, because women came in, bless their hearts, housewives had never seen hand tools, and I had because I worked on the farm. It's not a brag, it's a fact. And they had me teach the ladies how to use hand tools. And then they said, "Could you, as an experiment, we want to put you in this section, it's called the re-work section." Where a part would be damaged that we had to decide whether it could be repaired or scrapped. And they wanted to see if a woman could do that. So, I went in, and to me it was easy. You just use a little common sense, you know, and decide and then... So then, after that, they put some other women in that department.

De Mare: So you were like... you were the trial women to get in.

Nakashima: Well, in that particular place I was, yes. But they had such, uh, an outlook, or look on women that, "Well, maybe they can't do this kind of work." And we showed them we could. Women were welders and all... just, railroad, uh, operators in stations and all that, you know.

And they showed men that, "Yes, we could do it. Yes, we can." And that had a lot to do with opening it up for women, like, on the Navy base. I started out with men, but then more and more women came in and they could look back at the Rosies and see that, yes, they could do it.

De Mare: Do you think that it affected you personally? Do you think it changed you to do that kind of work? I mean, I know that you said you'd already been on the farm and... But can... do...

Nakashima: I don't know. I think whether I'd been a Rosie or not, I'd probably... I'm the kind that barges in, does it if it's to be done but I think it gave me more confidence to go into whatever was opened up for me.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nakashima: And now my daughter is on the workbench. She became an electronic technician after me. Hopefully, I had something to do with it.

00:15:22:12-----

Kelly: What, um... is there... You have a, a, terrific detailed memory and... and just... I imagine this space that, that you worked in so completely. What was it... can you just talk through a typical day when you were working as a riveter, like...

Nakashima: Well, yes. Um, we had to use 'jigs', they called them, it would be a... a frame, uh, sort of like a... a dress, what do you call the frame you hang a dress on to fit it? And you fitted these aluminum parts on to the jig, and then they had places where you drilled through to get the holes where they belonged. We learned to use, well, hand drills, electric drills. Well, we used twelve-inch long drills where they had to put a piece of big light with a hole in it to guide the drill. You could bend those things. 'Course, once in a while they'd break. That was kind of dangerous.

But you drilled all the holes, then you'd take it out of the jig and put the rivets in and put it together. And if you clenched a rivet, they called, if a rivet clenched, it went off sideways, you had to drill it out. So then you take a drill and drill through the head to the rivet and try not to make the hole any bigger 'cause then you had to use a bigger rivet, and they didn't like that. Uh, some of

the rivets were round heads, and some were flat-heads. So you had to countersink the hole, you had to learn to countersink the hole so that it would lay flat against the aluminum. And, uh, that's about generally what you did.

De Mare: Did you, um, did you enjoy the work?

Nakashima: I loved it. Because doing that kind of work, I liked to do different kinds of work. It was sure a lot better than housework. It still would be. I like that.

Kelly: And what... what... so what happened after the... so after you found out the war was done, what happened after that? I mean, did you keep working, were you...

Nakashima: I had that period from May 'til Jul... to August that I didn't work. I stayed home and my husband's family moved out. And I was helping sisters with school work and stuff like that.

De Mare: And then what did you go on to do?

00:17:48:09-----

Nakashima: I went to this Navy base and started out in clerical, and then I got a chance to take a six month course in electronics. Then I became an electronic equipment assembler. And they decided I was... would be qualified for electronic mechanics, so they put in for me and I was turned down. And my department head called me in, and this was like early sixties, and he said, "The only reason we can decide that you were turned down is because you are a woman." And they could tell you that then. And I had to accept it. They... their excuse was I didn't work on small... or big enough parts. We were sub-minaturizing things. So the guys I worked with said, "We're gonna put up a big panel with great big knobs and big dials and show 'em what you do." That it would be big enough parts. But it was because I was a woman. They hadn't ever had an electronic mechanic...

De Mare: How did that...

Nakashima: ...woman.

De Mare: How did that make you feel?

Nakashima: Very bad. I felt almost inferior, you know? I was good enough but I was a woman. But, heck, I can do this. But eventually then I became an electronic technician, which sounded a little more like a woman's work. And they were getting into the, uh, getting women's rights...

Kelly: Was it...

Nakashima: ...established.

Kelly: Was that... were you... because of what happened to you, was it... were you... how was your feelings about the rights that the... they were trying for in the sixties and seventies?

Nakashima: Well, I certainly believed in women's rights, and I still do. I used to say I was the original women's libber because they can do anything a man can do as long as they're physically able. And I stick to that. I fight for that. Even now.

00:19:45:11-----

Kelly: Were you in... were you in involved in any of the, um, work that... that the... the... what they call the women's movement was doing or did...

Nakashima: No, I didn't get... get... being on a Navy base... base, out in the desert, you weren't like, downtown, where you could go to a demonstration or something. Fact, you'd be... didn't dare demonstrate at the Navy base, of course. But they came around and they're... they're good. They gave women chances. I think in lots of cases the wages aren't up to men's wages, but they're getting closer and some of them are caught up.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nakashima: Or they will be. You have to remember I was born three years before women got the right to vote. They couldn't even vote. Where I lived it was very rare to see a woman drive a car because women just didn't do that. They weren't able. They were women. But, we showed 'em.

De Mare: Yeah.

Nakashima: Mm-hm.

De Mare: Is there... are there any stories that she's not shared? That's she's not telling us? (Laughter) Is there any...

Kelly: (unintelligible)

Miller: Well, when she talked about having to work just to go to high school, um, she would be, I was impressed with how hard she worked that she would have to on a Sunday evening she'd be strong enough to walk ten miles to go to... was it ten?

Nakashima: Mm-hm. In one place it was ten. The other place it was eight across the pastured hills.

Miller: (overlapping) (unintelligible) Just to go to high school, um, so at one of her jobs, before school, she would get up and kill a couple chickens for dinner...

Nakashima: But that was in the summertime.

Miller: Go clean the chickens, and then cook them for dinner. This is a girl who went through high school. And

I think of, you know, how people are who had to work their way through college and high school, kids would just be appalled to have to do something like that. So.

00:21:55:02-----

Nakashima: I would work during the summer and save my money for school for the winter. At three dollars a week, I could collect enough to buy a few clothes and what I needed.

De Mare: Do you... do you th... do you remember when you started getting paid the amount... when you started working and getting paid for the d... for the defense work, what were some of the things you spent your money on?

Nakashima: Well, the first thing my husband and I did was bought a new car. It was used. It was a 1938 Ford Coupe. We had a '33 Ford Coupe that was on its last legs. It did get us to California, and we bought this '38 Ford Coupe, which was wonderful. And we... it was five hundred dollars. So we got that paid off. That was what we did with our first checks. But we felt rich. Golly, we got sixty cents... sixty-six cents an hour, you know. But we lived

with my husband's brother, his cousin and a friend. The five of us lived in an apartment where the guys had their room and we had the pull-away bed- a Murphy bed in the living room. And we all worked the swing shift. We'd go to work and get off work and all race for Bill's Hot Dog Stand, and get a hot dog, and then we'd come home or we'd stop at the store and get some groceries and get a gallon of ice cream and sit around the table with our own spoon and eat the ice cream. It was just living high. But it was a lot of fun. It was... it was like an adventure 'cause I had never been in a big city or... And then we did our work, which was also like an adventure.

Kelly: What did you grow on your farm? What kind of farm- I know you said it was a dry-land farm- what... what did you grow or what did you...

Nakashima: Well, my mother had a big garden, and she would can vegetables. And we didn't have electricity, so we couldn't freeze anything. We raised... we butchered a steer in the fall, and a hog. I had to help butcher the hogs and I even skinned a calf one time. We had eight calves that died, and my father skinned five, and my brother two or something, and I skinned one. I was pretty proud of that.

But, uh, we had a lot of chickens, so we had fresh eggs. We had the meat. My mother would can the meat or put salt pork in the big, um, crock container. And we had cherry trees so she canned cherries. And we'd go pick apples. We couldn't afford the... the one's off the tree. We got what were called 'ground falls', or something. The ones that fell off the tree, we'd pick up the best ones, 'cause they were a lot cheaper. Then we'd... she's salvage what she could and can those. We lived very well. We had good food. All organic.

00:25:04:12-----

Kelly: Then what happened on the farms? I grew up on a farm, too, so...

Nakashima: Yeah. Well, after we left, all the kids were gone and went into war work, and my parents were getting older and they finally sold the farm and they moved to California. So we got to be with them until they died.

De Mare: So the family came together again in California. Interesting.

Nakashima: Yes.

De Mare: Do you ever go back to Nebraska?

Nakashima: I've gone back every other year for a long time to our high school reunion. It was a country high school—a one-room grade school and then a one-room high school with two teachers. But it was great high school. We could've gone to the University of Nebraska from there. And, uh, I had seven in my graduating class. Four of us are still living. And, um, doing pretty well.

De Mare: Seven in your graduating class.

Nakashima: It's...

Kelly: That's amazing. I was thinking, well, those class reunions we would different, right, wouldn't they? Wouldn't they?

Nakashima: We couldn't have class reunions. We had high school reunions.

Kelly: Oh, right.

Nakashima: And then we eventually called it the community reunion, and we finally said if you even drove through there, you could come to our reunion.

00:26:22:21-----

Nakashima: 'Cause it was a small country school. It was a wonderful school. No one ever smoked or drank. And one of the mothers in the neighborhood got some material together so we could have Sunday School. We'd go to the schoolhouse on Sunday morning for Sunday School, and we'd have our parties on Friday nights. They were called Sunday School parties, for lack of a better name. And summer we had refreshments- kool-aid and cookies, and then winter we had hot chocolate and cookies. That was high school.

De Mare: How did you meet your husband?

Nakashima: He was in high school. He was a senior when I was a sophomore. And, uh, actually, his father and my father knew each other when my father first came to the United States. And his father helped teach my father to speak English. But we lived in different communities, so

we didn't get acquainted with their family until we were in high school.

De Mare: Wow.

Nakashima: And then I met Glen, and then after he was discharged right from... right after Pearl Harbor, then we were married. Well, my husband had a motorcycle when I met him and he used to come and get me to take me back to high school on this old 1929 Harley Davidson. And then after we married, uh, we got a... a really deep red Harley. We found a place, a filling station that would take our car gas stamps and put 'em in our motorcycle so we could go a long ways. We got like sixty miles a gallon on the motorcycle. We could go places that other people couldn't.

De Mare: Was that... it was not kosher to... you couldn't just buy gas, you had to buy it for a car, you couldn't buy it for a motorcycle?

Nakashima: You had your gas A stamps were for cars, I think, B stamps were motorcycles; C stamps were something else. But you had to use them and put em... but we found one

guy that was willing to put our car gas stamps in our motorcycle.

00:28:23:19-----

De Mare: That seems like it would be good thing because you were getting more mileage out of the gas. You were getting more...

Nakashima: We were going places we weren't supposed to go, like up to San Luis Obispo or down to San Diego. And then, uh, we sold that and got an airplane. We bought a brand new airplane from... first we bought an airplane from the army; an old Oranco that we kind of fixed up but we flew that all over. Then we sold that and bought a brand new Air Coupe from the factory in River... Riverdale, Maryland. And we rode a Greyhound bus clear across country from Thursday night to Sunday morning, I think. And, uh, got the airplane and flew it back to Ridgecrest.

De Mare: And who was the pilot? Was it you or your husband?

Nakashima: My husband was the pilot. I was the navigator. I would say 'navigator to pilot', and I would... I had the air maps and I would check the ground and make the map match the ground. And then we sold that and got a Loscombe. Bought it in Washington State and flew it to California. Then we had kids, and then we got a... so we got a... a four place airplane, a Cessna 170, and we flew from Ridgecrest to Nebraska.

We'd set the kids- Barb was one and Buzz was three- and we'd set 'em up in the seat and tie 'em in 'til we got where we were straight and level up. And we had little quilts. We put one of 'em on the floor and one on the seat, and they'd sleep. They slept good at night, but they'd sleep as long as we were flying and then they'd come down and we'd tie 'em in and they just did fine.

Then after that we built an airplane from a kit. A 'Stitz'. A Stitz Flutterbug. And, uh, we... I didn't get many rides in that 'cause I was taking care of little kids, but... And we sold that and got race cars because our kids were quarter midget race drivers. And we raced in Oregon, Washington, California and Arizona. And, uh, it was fun, we did that for about seven years.

Kelly: You like... you like the thrill life.

Nakashima: Oh, yes.

00:30:45:19-----

Kelly: Did you see that look?

Nakashima: (overlapping) I look...

Kelly: She's like...

De Mare: Yes.

Nakashima: The Air Coupe was a two control. You didn't have any foot pedals; you did the... The steering wheel, it didn't have, it just had a wheel. You could pull back to make it go up, push forward, or turn left or turn right. Others had rudder controls with your feet, but this was simple. And it was not supposed to be able to spin. So we took it up one time to about ten thousand feet and tried everything in the book and we could not make it spin. But it was fun.

Kelly: That's a little dangerous.

Nakashima: No, not at that altitude, 'cause you can always pull out of whatever you were in. We did loops. One time we did a loop and when we were coming around, I saw the mountains and I said, "That looks like a negative." You know, the... the ground was up here and the sky... and it looked like a negative. So we did a second one real quickly, I thought, "I'll see if it looks like a negative this time." And the darkness closed in and I... I blacked out, and then it just opened up again. Just down to a little peephole and then it opened back up. I blacked out on the second one. So I didn't get to see if it looked like a negative.

De Mare: Well, you must've been a fun mom.

Nakashima: She and I have done a lot of adventures. We backpacked through the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Kelly: That's a... that's an amazing mother/daughter thing to do.

Nakashima: Oh, it was great. We had a lot of fun.

00:32:26:04-----

De Mare: So what's the next trip?

Nakashima: Well, she's busy and I... I've climbed Mount Whitney twenty times. It's the highest peak in the continental United States.

Miller: Last time on her eightieth birthday.

Nakashima: I tell people I'm training to do it on my ninetieth birthday, but I doubt if I'll... but you have to have goals. She and I are planning to do a half marathon in October. Oh, I'll walk it, but I don't run anymore. I used to run but I don't run anymore. I walk. She runs. Boy.

De Mare: I'd love for you to just put us in context and tell us again that you did this kind of work and what your daughter is doing now.

Nakashima: Okay.

Kelly: And why you're here.

De Mare: Yeah, and why you're here. Tell us why... why we're all here.

Nakashima: Well, first, I was an electronic technician, and she got the opportunity to go to... what was it called? A...?

Miller: Co-op program.

Nakashima: Co-op program. She had to go to college first, at least twelve units of work at the base, at least six hours a day, I think it was.

Miller: Oh, I could work up to thirty hours a week.

Nakashima: Oh.

Miller: You had to take thirteen units at college and... and it was an opportunity to get an education and work. I was a single parent at the time and my mom helped..

Nakashima: And of course..

Miller: Took care of the kids and I had a career and now it's almost thirty years later and I'm an electronic technician still but now I'm a supervisor. Mostly men. I work on the Ranges, which is typically, mostly, men, uh, do the work. I...

00:34:09:04-----

Nakashima: She was a tracker.

Miller: I worked on the Range. Not too many women, I think, really cared to do that kind of work that I did, and I'm sure it's because my mom taught me to... to work hard and, uh...

De Mare: Can you explain what the Range is to people who don't know?

Miller: The Range, uh, well, where I work in trial, like the Ranges, are a... a testing, a weapons testing facility. And so they... we have a large land area in the desert where they can drop bombs, test missiles on the Ranges. And, uh, the department I work in, uh, provides it's instrumentation

coverage, uh, video coverage of the, uh, weapons, uh, testing. So.

Nakashima: Can I tell the story about your first tracking experience?

Miller: Uh, I hope it's not classified.

Nakashima: She was...

Kelly: She'll tell us, and then you'll have to kill us.

Miller: Yeah, I'd have to kill you.

Nakashima: She was worried, of course, the first time tracking. It's a big tracking mount that opens up like a clamshell.

Miller: Optical tracking mount that you sit in the seat and drive it with a joystick with cameras on the arms that you point at the aircraft.

Nakashima: And they fired the missile and she said, "I've got it. I've got it." And she thought, 'This missile is

slowing down.' It turned around and went back. She had
locked on to a bird.

Miller: (overlapping) ...to a bird.

00:35:45:16-----

Miller: I don't have it.

Nakashima: First (unintelligible) but she became an
excellent tracker.

Kelly: That's funny.

Miller: I guess that's not classified.

Kelly: I'm sure it happens a lot.

Nakashima: Her boss said, "You're not the first person
that did it and you won't be the last one."

Miller: They call those a "B-1-R-D"

Nakashima: She is a Rosebud, because I finally got to go to my first, I've been a...

Miller: Rosie.

Nakashima: ...Rosie officially for several years but then they had the convention in Las Vegas and it was close enough to home to go to it. There I met Rosebuds and I realized, "Hey, Barb could be a Rosebud." So I went home and signed her up as a Rosebud.

Miller: Well, then I heard about her time at the convention and, in Las Vegas, and about the organization and I wanted to come.

Nakashima: And we've had a ball.

Miller: Yeah, we have. We really enjoyed it. We met a lot of wonderful ladies.

De Mare: What was... what's that been like for you? Being... being reunited with the... not reunited because you didn't know them, but meeting other women who did this kind of work?

Nakashima: Oh, it's very interesting to me and I am amazed that we're five here in their nineties. I'll be eighty-seven in three weeks, but I hope I can hang in there 'til I'm ninety-five. I kind-of plan to.

Miller: I'm sure you will.

Nakashima: I have goals. One of my goals is to be a hundred and two, so I'll probably make it.

00:37:24:14-----

Nakashima: It used to be a hundred and twenty, but as I get older, I think, do I want to hurt this much for that many years?

Miller: (overlapping) This is...

Nakashima: No, I... I'm gonna live for a while.

De Mare: Yeah. I think so. I think so.

Kelly: You're doin' half marathons and...

De Mare: Yeah.

Kelly: ...you know.

Nakashima: Well, we'll see if I can do that.

Miller: I'm sure you can.

Nakashima: I could except I had a knee replaced about two and a half years ago and it's not doing right. I think I'm gonna have another surgery in July. Much smaller than a total replacement, and I think I can have time to get trained til... by October 8th, or whatever. I will if I can.

Kelly: And what has it meant, Barb, what has it meant to you to have your mom at this point in her life, to see her kind-of reconnect with this Rosie business?

Miller: Oh, to me it's been a very inspirational, uh, to see all the women that did the work during the work and I... I knew about it but being present here, uh, it... it came alive for me and, uh, hearing their stories and the jobs they did and, just, uh, so proud of them and so proud of my

mom, um, that I... I've... I've always known she was a... an amazing woman.

Nakashima: Oh.

Miller: Uh, uh, to really see what she did during the war and then how she continued afterwards and being such a champion for women, um, for everybody, really. And, uh, it... it's opened my eyes to see the... the background that, you know, she came from and, um, the only one that did that kind of work as well. It's been really, really fun.

00:39:21:09-----

Nakashima: One thing to me that's inspirational is reading these books of the Rosie stories. One lady wrote that it was midnight, a train was coming, and she had to run a quarter of a mile, through the dark, on a path to throw a switch so that the train could get on the right track. She said, "But I don't want to run that." They said, "You have to." So she ran down this, in the dark, quarter of a mile, and threw the switch. Think that they welded big things in ships and my little riveting was really nothing compared to

what some of those ladies did. They drove trucks. They
did a lot of things.