

Mabel Myrick

The Real Rosie the Riveter Project

Interview 27

Interview Conducted by

Elizabeth Hemmerdinger

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Nashville, Tennessee

For The

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

Interview: Mabel Myrick

Interviewers: Elizabeth Hemmerdinger

Date: June 25, 2010

Place: Nashville, Tennessee

Myrick: Mabel Myrick.

Hemmerdinger: Where are you from?

Myrick: Kimberly, Alabama.

Hemmerdinger: And where do you live now?

Myrick: In Kimberly.

Hemmerdinger: And where did you grow up?

Myrick: Right there in Kimberly.

Hemmerdinger: And where did you do the work that you did during the war.

Myrick: I worked as a secretary I the Pentagon building for the War Department.

Hemmerdinger: What kind of work did you do?

Myrick: Well I- we typed letters, we typed what we called uh interoffice memos, we called them endorsements and I answered the phone. I kept up with people in our organization who were travelling. Uh some of the letters I typed were actual letters signed by the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson. And when my boss dictated those, I typed them up; he checked them; we put them in a folder; I took them up to the fifth floor to his secretary's office and waited for his signature. And then we brought them back to our office and we mailed them.

Hemmerdinger: How long were you doing that?

Myrick: I was there until the war was over. I went in '44 and the war was over, you know in latter part of '45. And from there I was transferred to Veteran's Administration.

Hemmerdinger: And before you got the job at the Pentagon, what were you doing?

Myrick: Well, I went right out of high school.

Hemmerdinger: How old were you?

Myrick: 18. Um the government- a representative from the government came around to our school and offered us to take a test. Those of us who had taken book keeping or typing and shorthand. When we took the test, they sent us our results and when mine came it had a train ticket to DC.

Hemmerdinger: Oh my goodness.

Myrick: And I thought a lot of my classmates would also be going so I wasn't really worried. But when I got to the train station there was only one other girl I knew there. And when we got there she was assigned to the Navy Department doing payroll because had taken book keeping and I was sent to the Pentagon.

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Hemmerdinger: So here's an 18 year old girl leaving home and uh what was it like, what was your experience like?

Myrick: uh it was a new world. I had four brothers in service and my mom and dad did not feel good about me leaving but they did not try and stop me. In fact, they gave me the money to go on. So um, yea, we all kept in touch with each other that was one thing. Uh my brothers wrote me and we all wrote home. And but I had- and while I was there I was able to see 3 of my brothers but I could never get two of them together. And in November my youngest brother was killed in France.

Hemmerdinger: November of what year?

Myrick: 1944. And I had met a young man there that I very much liked. And he- uh went through Africa and into Italy and he was killed there so the war was getting very close to me.

Hemmerdinger: What did it feel like to go from a home that was so protected, and you left home with a suitcase?

Myrick: that's right. Uh when I was in high school, I was not allowed to go to the ball games even though they were after class, in the daytime. So I was very sheltered but it was a new life, but I tried to remember how I was brought

up and I also we had orientation that they warned us not to be alone with any of the soldiers or sailors coming through and not take them home with us because some some bad things had happened to some of the girls that took that risk. So we went out in groups. Of course I met a lot of new friends at work and we would go out in groups and when we dated we always double-dated or triple-dated so-

Hemmerdinger: You- these women- these young girls were from-

Myrick: Other states

Hemmerdinger: Other states.

Myrick: I met girls from all over.

Hemmerdinger: Where did you all live?

Myrick: uh well the government had a place called Arlington Farms that you could stay but when my classmate and I went, we already knew a girl up there and she wanted us to live with her until we found a place of our own and we did. And we found a place out on End Street, northwest. It had uh a

little stove, a little sink and a couch that made a bed. And that's where we lived most of the time I was there. And it was headed downtown into work.

Hemmerdinger: And do you have a story for us about what your first day of work was like? Or your best day? Or a challenging day when they asked you to do something that you never thought you were capable of?

Myrick: The first day? Uh they sent me to the Pentagon by bus and I met a lady there on the Concourse who took me to the office where I would be. And the office was an open office. There were about 12 or more people in management. Most of them- a lot of them were officers and some civilian men and women, a lot of women and one secretary. So there was a lot of work. I had to take dictation. A lot of times, we had to work really late. And my boss thought nothing of dictating three hours. It can tier your hand. (laughs) but uh I did enjoy all of it but you know, we were glad when the war was over so the boys could come home. I was glad for my brothers to come home.

06:16:12-----

Hemmerdinger: Did you go on working?

Myrick: When I came home, yea I did. I found a job at- it was not as exciting, it was in a jewelry store. In an office, in a jewelry store.

The End.