

Violet Johnson and Elsie

The Real Rosie The Riveter Project

Interview 3

Interview Conducted by

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For The

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Interview: Violet Johnson and Elsie
Interviewers: Anne de Mare & Kirsten Kelly
Date: April 14, 2010
Place: Lutherville, Maryland

De Mare: Could you have imagined your life now when you were younger?

Johnson: Oh, I just can't imagine that and I don't think my friends up in Pennsylvania, that I write to, picture where I live 'cause they have not come to see me, y'know, but I just can't, I don't think they picture, and the grounds are so beautiful, and I just, I just never dreamed a poor girl, living on a farm with the, as poor as we were, would have the kind of life that I have now.

Elsie: Well now, the thing of it is, you know the Depression years, we lived through the Depression years, and it really took its toll on a lot of people. And the respect that, uh, people on the farms, for instance, if they bought, uh, oh, feed for the cattle, they would get these bags of feed and they used the, it, it was a, like uh...

Johnson: Flour sacks.

Elsie: They made, yeah, they made dresses, I mean, it was prints that could be used to make clothing. So that was like a recycling.

Johnson: Yeah.

De Mare: And would they make...

Elsie: I had a couple dresses that my mother made for me out of those things. I mean, we, we were forced to move to a farming area but we didn't do anything like, uh, I mean I had been living in the city, so it was a different situation.

De Mare: A different situation.

Johnson: I remember wearing clothes that one of my cousins- was five years older than I was- and I wore, when Nick, when they came to where my size, I wore them. You know, but you know that five years later styles change. So I didn't, we knew, and there were kids who, like I said

before, their, their parents had a business, they'd dress real well, but we dressed poorly, you know, but, but yet we were happy, I think, because we, I don't know, we just...

Sometimes I thought it was a sad life but I guess it, when I think, um, we had horses to ride, because we would ride the farm horses and every Sunday when I lived with my grandparents, every Sunday my, all my cousins would come on the farm and we would have a lot of fun, you know, so I'm very, I was very close to all my cousins. Yeah. Jump down the hay hole, or just do anything crazy like that. Yeah. It was fun.

Elsie: One thing with Martins, another thing that, talking about women, uh, as far as clothing is concerned, that was the first time that many of these women wore slacks. Or some of them, in some of the factories, where they worked, wore coveralls. I have some pictures that I will bring tomorrow.

Johnson: We have...

Elsie: Of a rivet, I have one of a rivet gun. Uh, it, there are several books out now, and one of them I just

received recently from a good old days, and it, it has a lot in there about, uh, women in World War II.

De Mare: Wonderful.

Elsie: Rosie the Riveter, and, and uh, there's a picture of a rivet gun. But the clothing that we wore at Martin's, I think it was like, uh, an overall with a, a blouse, a separate blouse. That it would, could be tucked in and we had to wear the, the straps, you know, the, the overalls. Not, not the coveralls, but it had short sleeves where we wouldn't be getting into the machinery.