

**Susan Taylor King**

**The Real Rosie The Riveter Project**

**Interview 6**

Interview Conducted by

Anne de Mare & Kirsten Kelly

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Baltimore, Maryland

For The

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Interview: Susan Taylor King  
Interviewers: Anne de Mare & Kirsten Kelly  
Date: April 16, 2010  
Place: Baltimore, Maryland

De Mare: Just to begin, um, can you introduce yourself, tell me your name and tell me when you were born.

King: I am Susan Taylor King, born July 13, 1924, and uh, a place called Kilmarnock, Virginia, that's northern Virginia.

De Mare: Can you describe your childhood a little bit?

King: As a child I came into the household of, I was the second child, mother and father, we lived with our grandparents for a while, in a small house. Then, Daddy built us a bungalow with two acres of land, and I lived there with three, four other children, my mother had had. My mother was a homemaker all of the time. We loved to do garden, pick flowers, pick berries, and play in the yard with my brother. When I be- was, oh, about fifteen years old, my parents decided that that wasn't a place to raise

children. So Daddy heard about, uh, his friends in Baltimore making five dollars a day, and he was making only one dollar, so he put all four of us in a car and drove us to Baltimore. We lived with our cousin in a small apartment until we were able to get our own. We enrolled in the school system in Maryland, and I finished Doug, Frederick Douglass High School. I was in the class of the first graduate of a three-year course because the war had begun.

In 1941, another baby came so we became a family of six. And, uh, after I finished high school, I was seeking employment because I really wanted to be a nurse or a teacher. I thought that was a way to get out of poverty. I went to look for a job. Jobs were hard to find, and for a girl at eighteen years old without any typing ability, that's what they called it back in the day. And I decided I did not want to be a housekeeper, and I did not want to marry, so three, two other girls and I went to what we called the Defense Training School. While we were at the Defense Training School, we took the trade of riveting. And that landed us at Boring Highway, in the old Chevrolet Plant, uh, riveting. That's how Rosie the Riveter came into my life. At that time it wasn't important except that we were riveters, we were doing something, and making more

money than anybody in our family. We actually made more than our parents at that time.

So we began saving bonds, and they planned marriage and I planned college. But I was on the job and the only way I, the only way out was to say I was going to be a nurse. So I politely wrote that I was going to be a nurse, I was going to Hampton because Hampton was, uh, training young women to be nurses in the army, in the segregated, of course, army at that time. When I got there I decided I wanted to be a social worker. This was the story of my life, so we got out of that, while at Hampton, uh, one of my sisters became ill with a tumor of the brain, and (unintelligible) came with the economy again and so I came back home and helped the family at this time. I took a job as, what was that, a nurse, a nurse's assistant, for...

Kelly: Can we stop?

De Mare: Yes.

**00:03:53:15**-----

De Mare: Do you wanna continue just to tell the story right now, or do you want me to go back and ask you some

questions about what you've already talked about? There's a couple things you said that are really interesting.

Kelly: Let's go back. Yeah.

Unseen: Yeah, let's go back.

De Mare: Yeah. Um, you said that you decided that you didn't want to marry. Can you tell me why that is?

King: I didn't want to marry young, 'cause I'd seen enough young mothers with a house full of babies, and wonderin', they had to come out here, we used to call out here, this, this particular neighborhood wasn't developed at the time. But there was a place in the valley that all the young girls who didn't have anything to do, the only jobs we had here would be housekeepers and nurses, uh, maid. Not everyone, I had enough sisters and brothers, and I really didn't want to be a nursemaid. A cook, a housecleaner, 'cause I'm not good at those things, and I didn't want to do it for a living.

De Mare: Do you remember when you were that age what you did want to do? What you thought you would, if you could

look at your future back then, do you remember what you did want to do?

King: I want, I've always wanted to be a professional, and I always wanted to marry a man with more education than I had so he'd make a bigger salary and we could have a home to live in, support our children.

De Mare: That's kinda what happened, isn't it?

King: Yes, it is.

De Mare: Um, can you talk a little bit about when you were down in Virginia, 'cause you said that, you know, you were very poor down in Virginia. What did your father do for a living? Can you talk a little about the home life when you were very young, before you moved to Maryland?

**00:05:23:00**-----

King: Oh. When we were in Virginia, Daddy was what they call a seasonal worker. In the summertime, he worked on the waters, fishing or crabbing. And uh, in his spare time, he would do, working as a gardener. He worked for Du

Pont, I guess you've heard of the Du Ponts? Yes, at Du Pont, they bought an estate down there in Virginia, and my daddy was one of the people who did the lawns, and kept the lawns and the place going. And then when the, the boats went out to sea, he would go out to sea and catch fish and work at the wharf, and that type of thing.

De Mare: Ok, and your mother was at home because you had a lot of brothers and sisters?

King: Yes.

De Mare: Ok, and what did your, um, what did your other brothers and sisters do?

King: Of the, uh, brothers and sisters, uh, one sister was, is a, well, she's dead. One sister's a nurse. One sister died early on, with a tumor of the brain before she was able to do professional work. Her idea was to be a nurse, but she died of cancer of the brain. Uh, sister, other sister became a teacher, got a master's degree at N.. finished Morgan, master's degree at NYU and taught in New York for 32 years. She passed in 1985. Um, my uh, third sister became a nurse here in Baltimore, she went to the

hospital and did nurse training, and worked in Boston, (I mean) Baltimore, went away to Rochester, New York, raised a family, and worked as a nurse. She's back here now in retirement.

My fourth sister finished Morgan in chemistry, and she went to California and worked as an engineer. She's back here in retirement. My brother, the oldest of the family, never wanted to go to school, so he followed Daddy's footsteps when we came to Baltimore working at the waterfront. And uh, retired as a grass keeper, caretaker of grass, whatever. He was married and had five children. My one sister was married and had three children. I was married and had two children. They were the grandchildren of the family. Both parents died at, I would think by today's marker, at an early age. My daddy died at 77 with a heart condition. My mother died at 78 with multilyomeia, a cancer condition of the spine. So us, the four of us living, kind of stuck together until tragedy came and my sister died five years ago, leaving now three girls. So that's where we are with the family.

00:08:20:00-----

De Mare: Did you ever think when you were younger that you would all, that you would all do as well as you did? I mean, it's extraordinary, actually. It seems like you moved a great distance.

King: Oh, no, not really. I had a, some role models down there in Virginia who were, some cousins who'd gone to college. But as the war came, people became more affluent, and uh, when I go back down there now to visit an aunt who is 97 years old, some, some of the (young), people I grew up with are, have gone to college. In fact, I know a family, there were ten, ten children and all ten of them went to college; went to Hampton and Virginia State. So people are moving on. Don't know what you're going to go... where you're going.

De Mare: Um, can you, uh, can we talk about your, your earliest work experiences? Was the, was the job in the defense plant your first job?

King: Yes, it was.

De Mare: And can you talk about what it was like as a young woman to um, to earn your first money and to, uh, what that meant to you when you were that old?

King: Well, I repeated to myself, when I get enough money I'll have more than two pairs of shoes. Because when I was young we had a pair of shoes to wear to school and a pair to wear to church. So my dream was to have more than two pairs of shoes. So when I got my first money, and I'd more than two skirts, two blouses, so when I got my first money, after I (paid) bought the war bond, gave Mother some, I would buy a piece of clothes for my wardrobe. Never very extravagant but I always built my wardrobe up. And that was it. You hadn't had money, I wasn't going to spend it in junk.

But I was going downtown, and of course you don't know down... Baltimore was one of the most segregated northern cities. People of color could not try on clothes downtown, so there were stores on what we call Pennsylvania Avenue that sold label clothes and very good clothes. My mother always steered us to Pennsylvania Avenue to buy the clothes because downtown you could buy clothes, you couldn't try it on. If you bought it and it didn't fit even you couldn't take it back. And some stores we, you couldn't even go

into downtown. I remember the experience because I never had it growing up, but I remember going into a, trying to go into a store downtown, and uh, the saleslady said, "We don't serve you black folk here" and uh, my sister and I had to go out because we didn't want to be arrested.

Also downtown, back in the day, if we wanted to eat we had to stand up. That's what people don't talk about in Baltimore. We had to stand at a sp... specific counter, at the lunch counter, just to buy a hot dog. So people went downtown but there were many reasons why, and I do believe I, I'm trying to remember, but I do believe we had a water fountain even in Baltimore saying, I know they had it in Annapolis, saying either "white" or "colored" or "black" and "white"; that was downtown Baltimore. So it was very, very, uh, segregated, that social and cultural area of Baltimore was.

There were places in Baltimore that they didn't, even the big park, they didn't even want, they had a black area for, Druid, Druid Hill Park, and a white. And I remember very vividly my uh, uncle, was very irate and I would say today he would be a racist, if he was Malcolm X he woulda'... 'Course he's my brother, Mother's brother, so he's long since dead. But I remember he was walking through Druid Hill Park and they arrested him because they

say he walked in the, uh, white section. So he had to stay in jail overnight until somebody got him out. And of course his reason was that maybe, he didn't have any reason, maybe he had been drinking or something, walking from his girlfriend's house.

So that's one part of Baltimore that people don't want to dwell on. Of course, when I came here I did attend the, uh, inte- the segregated high school. There were two, two high schools in Baltimore, see, Dunbar on the east side and Douglass on the west side. Our teachers were very, very well trained, because University of Maryland would not allow teachers, uh, people to go, people of color there, so the people of color who had finished Morgan or Kappen State or Boeye, uh, the eastern shore school, Maryland would give them scholarship to go to Chicago, New York, Pennsylvania, anywhere you want to get your master's degree. Therefore we had a select group of teachers teaching us. Our black teachers prob- were probably more educated than the white teachers because we did not have to pay for a higher degree. That was, they were the people who taught me. And I felt that I had a very good education here in Baltimore.

**00:13:46:08**-----

De Mare: It's really, it's really interesting. It's really important to, to get that stuff out there because people don't talk about it anymore.

King: I don't even know if people know about it.

De Mare: Do you remember, um, I want to go back to, I want to talk about segregation in the work place. Um, you worked at Eastern...

King: Aircraft.

De Mare: Aircraft. Um, and you started working there in what year? Do you remember?

King: Uh. Forty-two.

De Mare: And were there, were there, uh, were the, were there other black women working there and black men working there at the time, and was that a new thing for Eastern Aircraft? Do you remember back to that time?

King: Uh, being uh, eighteen years old when I went there, I guess my mind wasn't really focused on the soc... social aspect. But Eastern Aircraft was a new plant, it was owned by the Chevrolet Plant, as I have heard people say, and, uh, the federal government bought it as a defense plant to make planes or small parts for planes. So with Eastern Aircraft itself was completely integrated, I wasn't the first work... black worker there but the, the black people and the white- everybody intermingled. Uh, public transportation was integrated, always, in the state of Maryland, so you did not feel the prejudice anywhere in my first work place.

De Mare: Ok. And was the, um, supervising, um, the workers were integrated, male/female, black/white...- what was the, what was the management like? Do you remember?

King: If I can remember back... All white, I'm sure. Maybe after I left, because I was there in the early years, maybe some black people rose to be supervisors or whatever, because we were all on the ground floor to begin with.

De Mare: Right.

King: Because I was actually taught riveting by a black force, people who had, men who had finished Hampton, or agricultural schools in the southland and they had come here to teach and they were all black so I'm sure before this whole thing was over, we did have blacks who had, uh, come up through the ranks. That I'm not too sure but I don't know, I would just suspect.

De Mare: And when you went to the training school, you said you were taught by black men, was your training...

Kelly: Sorry, can we... let's...

**00:16:01:18-----**

De Mare: So, uh, I just want to go back to, you said that, the, the, that when you learned how to rivet you were trained by black men...

King: Yes.

De Mare: Only black men. Was your training school integrated or segregated? Did you...

King: Segregated. We, I lived in segregated Baltimore with education, so the uh, training school was on (Wayshus?) Street and Freemont Avenue, completely in the black neighborhood.

De Mare: Ok. I just wasn't sure because it was defense training, not high school, if it was also that way.

King: Yes.

De Mare: Um, do you remember how much you got paid when you worked?

King: What, Camille, what did...? That lady said, she said s'bout fifty-seven dollars a week... I really don't recall back that far.

De Mare: But it was a lot of money at the time?

King: Yeah, it was.

De Mare: And you said, you made a, you made a statement that I thought was so interesting, that when you went to work you earned more than your parents were earning.

King: Yeah, because at the time, see my daddy wasn't a high school graduate. And uh, even though he worked on the, uh, where'd Daddy work? Down in the shipyard or waterfront, he probably, his salary probably wasn't any more than mine. Sixty dollars a week. Unless he worked overtime.

De Mare: And you were still living at home at that time?

King: Yes I was.

De Mare: Okay.

**00:17:11:01**-----

De Mare: Um, can you just, can we kind of go to a different idea, which is: can you explain to me exactly what you did? Can you explain how a person riveted and what you worked on and the aircraft that you worked on? Can you talk just a little bit about, whatever you remember about actually working..

King: I didn't really (unintelligible)... But uh, I worked on the part of the plane was called the elevator, somewhere on the wing of the old fashioned plane. It was something called a elevator that, uh, monitored the way, the level the plane was going in the air. And I was holding the rivet gun, putting the rivet in the hole, and my girlfriend was behind holding a bar called 'buckin' the rivet', and the rivet had to be a certain distance inside and a certain distance from the bottom.

If the rivet was flawed, your supervisor was always over your head because he said, "You cannot dent this aluminum." A, a small crack in the aluminum would cause the planes to come down. So I was the riveter. My girlfriend was on the back, called 'the buckin', so we would have breaks every so often during the day so we wouldn't get tired or nervous... and I guess that's about... where the elevator of the plane is I really don't know, but I worked on the small parts.

De Mare: That's a lot of pressure on a person, if you know the plane's gonna go down if that rivet isn't right!

King: Yeah, it was, I don't know.

De Mare: That's a lot of pressure. Um, do you remember how you got the job in the factory?

King: After I finished the defense training school I filled out an application.

De Mare: And you said that Eastern Aircraft was, was integrated?

King: Yes.

De Mare: Were the other factories in the area integrated? Can you talk about what that dynamic was?

King: I, I'm sure I really don't know. I was eighteen years old but I'm sure the shipyard and the Martin and everybody... I never heard anybody say that they were not integrated- the factory work. It wasn't the factory in Baltimore, maybe the, the black employees didn't get up the ladder as high, but Baltimore was socially integrated. That has to do with trying on clothes and drinking and whatever. We all, we traveled on buses and streetcars; we didn't have to go to the back.

And we had in our neighborhood, we had our grocery stores, we could go to the market and stuff like that. It wasn't, uh, economics. And it was, but it was socially, and I think if you had listened carefully to what you were hearing yesterday some of those ladies, they still have this little social thing. For instance, where I'm living now, this is a Jewish neighborhood. And if you come over here on Fridays you don't see anything but people going to church. Friday and Saturday, whole street, all up and down park everywhere I lived, and we the only, this side is black; in back's a big Jewish home, across the street they're all Jewish Rabbis. So downtown where I lived, um, they weren't, uh, Jewish, they were um, they were Protestant white. And but, when the blacks moved in, they moved out. So it's that kind of prejudice you find here in Baltimore.

De Mare: Yeah.

**00:20:45:27-----**

Kelly: So, um, you were saying that, uh, which I, you know I'm not, I'm not from a city or I'm not from

Baltimore. I'm from a farm. So you were saying that some of the ladies, yesterday there was still, they still...

King: Yeah.

Kelly: ...hold on to a social thing?

King: She, she shook her head, she agrees with you, you can pick it up, you could...

Kelly: How, what do you mean, just so I understand, what do you... just something...

King: Tell us something, there's something...

Unseen: You tell them.

King: Oh, oh, uh, there's, there's some level of... now. I must say, say the Rosie's are very graceful, gracious to me. They have accepted me full and whole-heartedly. And I don't depict racism in the group as such. And it wasn't that they invited me, I heard about the group and went into- like infiltrating- but there are certain things that they could say that you could see that they actually grew

up in a kind of racist society. And of course the lady yesterday kept referring to Washington- I don't know what was on her mind- and when I told her war was wrong regardless of who, then she went to quote the bible on me, that there be wars and rumors of wars, which meant that she is not in tune with what's going on with black America or any other liberal America today. And uh, I go on laughing, and keep on going.

De Mare: That was a very interesting moment yesterday.

King: It was. And I, I went to a meeting down on the port, and the woman had my (BLEEP)... I shouldn't call her a name but anyway...

De Mare: We'll take it back...

King: But she had our table set up and when I walked up and said, "I'm Susan King" she looked over my shoulder, she said, "Mrs. King?" I said, "Yes." "Oh, I did not know." And I said, "Sure, you did not know that they had black Rosies at Eastern Aircraft, did ya?." And she just turned red and kept on going. But I'm sure she expected Susan King coming from Zone Fifteen to be anything other than

black. But they're usually very gracious when I do show up, and uh, we've been to many things. And, uh, we've always been embraced very warmly. But it's the old Baltimore spirit.

**00:23:20:00**-----

De Mare: Do you feel like... Can you talk a little bit about after the war, um, you know after... when you worked at Eastern, you were working alongside everyone: men, women, black, white, you were, you know, the effort was for the, you know, to build the aircraft, and yet you left before the end of the war...

King: Yeah.

De Mare: 'Cause you wanted to go to nursing school. But do you remember what the... did you feel like after the war... were the relations between working men and working women, black and white, were they the same as...? Can you talk to the change after the war, when that need, do you understand what I'm asking, I'm trying to get a handle on, you may not be the right person to ask 'cause you were not still in the factories, but I'm just wondering if you, 'cause you have

your pulse on what the energy in Baltimore was like. Did segregation become worse after the war? Was there an introduction that it got a little better after the war? Because people had been working together? Can you just speak to that at all?

King: Uh, after the war I actually did not go into the laboring force. My, my pursuit after the war was to get into a, an intellectual force. We had our own separate s... ss..., uh, schools and whatever, I've told you that, but as far as the work force...

I think my father still, when the war was over and the shipyard was over, he found a job as a repairman, at Western Auto. The social thing in Baltimore remained the same. Uh, you could hear soldiers of color coming back saying the experience that they had had in the southern states when they got back home... In Baltimore, they could not find any job. But many of them after World War II did go get The Educational Grant and went on to college.

So I don't know at, that anything really got any better until nineteen and fifty-four. See, we were coming out of the Depression, we went through, been through Roosevelt, and we were seeing Kennedy, but it was 1954 when we actually started fighting for integration. I guess

things began to look up all over. For Baltimore still seemed a little sleepy town doing what it could do, and people that had real jobs here, teach- teaching, social security, um, the Chevrolet Plant, and Martins. Martins continued working and hiring lots- and Westing House. So, I don't know whether it was... jobs just open up.

**00:26:02:24**-----

De Mare: Can you talk a little bit about how you think your experience working as a young woman, and also working in a defense plant on such important work, how did that kind of inform the rest of your life? Do you think that that time gave you something special or, or taught you something that you took on later in life? 'Cause you didn't do that same kind of work, you didn't stay in that work at all. But can you talk to what that meant to you?

King: I really had no, uh, afterthoughts about working in the defense plant. That to me was a means to- to an end. It wasn't something that I wanted to do. If I'd wanted to I probably could have stayed there and made more money than I made after I left. But that- that was just a part of my life that was finished and gone, and the only reason I'm

picking up with it now because I became a part of Rosie the Riveter and there's ladies, uh, bringing back to my mind things that I'd never even thought about doing.

Kelly: Like what?

King: Like I... just... to me, working in the defense plant, and sitting home taking care of children, wasn't what I was all about. They're probably better off, richer and everything else than I am, but that wasn't what I wanted. I wanted to serve society in a different way. I'd rather, uh, be in church group, or rather to be playing cards, or rather to be visiting the sick and that kind of thing. That, that's what I was all about. I wasn't about a house full of children. I accept the two that I had and tried to give them the best education that I could. And when I became a grandmother I tried hard to take care of them and guide them in some directions.

**00:27:53:08**-----

De Mare: Can you talk about the work that you did go on to do? Can you talk about your work teaching? Can you, can you tell me the story of kind of your, your life after you

went to college and you had gotten the education and where you took your life?

King: Well, when I... aft... I went to college, um, and I of course, stayed out some years when my sister died. When I went back the second time, I would smile, I'd say, "Now what is it that I want to do? Where am I going to meet this man with more money and more education than I have?"

So, I went on in to college and sure enough this young bachelor, and I had no idea that he was actually lookin' at me, but, uh, one of his friends one night came, called my number and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Nothing, really." So he said, uh, "Would you like to come to an after foot game... football party? I have an interesting person who wants to meet you."

I said, "Oh, come... Ok, I'll come." So I went to this party and who should be sitting there, waiting for me to come in, would be one of my professors. I said, "Wow." So we started dating. That was in 1954. In 1953 he had taught me '52 and '53 first year biology. We had gone to a homecoming dance- not with him, but he... I knew he was always there. And, uh, then we started dating. I was a student, getting ready to graduate, but there was nothing anybody could do because on lunch hour we would go and have

lunch together and he'd always bring me pretty gifts and whatever, and the, the dates went on and on and on until 1956. We got married. Back when, I graduated in '54.

Two years after, uh, we got married, and I was a housekeeper. And I had two children, and I decided, "Let me go back and do something else." So I went on to get a, earn a, what they call an advanced degree in elementary education. And I tried teaching elementary education for a year, but those little biddies gave me the griefs. And, uh, I decided this isn't what I want.

**00:30:24:00-----**

King: So I went back and took classes in science education, so I could, uh, go on and teach a field that I was really interested in. And from science education as a teacher I said, "Oh, no, this is not what I really want, either." So I really wanted to be a counselor. So I went on to Johns Hopkins, took some more classes, took thirty-another thirty hours, and became a counselor in the Baltimore City Public Schools and stayed there for the next twenty-two years. And within, uh, within those... marriage, some... somewhere within this twenty-two years, my husband, as a professor, came down with a kidney infection, and

died, uh, shortly after the kidney machine. We'd been married twenty years.

I had two children, no grandchildren, so uh, one week after his death, the first grandchild was born. Uh, the, my second daughter is Camille, you've met her, went away to college. Meantime, my oldest daughter who was pursuing a career as a dance teacher and an owner of a dance school, developed what they call "Sankofa Dance Theatre" and her and her four children developed a dance company. Her husband, her second husband, was the African drumming teacher and the two boys and two girls were the core of her dance company and this company has gone on now for about twenty-one years. They dance all over. We've been to Rotterdam, Africa about four or five times, we've been all over America dancing, uh, for the past twenty years. The twenty years has brought her marriages of her children to people of, girls of like interests. One of my grandsons knows a businessperson... and I guess that's where we are now.

Uh, Camille's children- one is still in col.. in college, in engineering. The first one has finished in elementary education. The little boy's an artist. So I guess that's where I am. So I'm grandmother, great-grandmother and mother. Certainly enjoying the senior

years, I guess, happily. I never remarried. I didn't have time to remarry.

**00:33:10:14-----**

Kelly: Can any of the, the work that you did, er, fill any sort of gender struggles, I guess is...

King: No, because in teaching- is a female, it's a female field. So there was not really any gender... it was gender, perhaps, if I were trying to advance to maybe an assistant principal back in the day, or a department head back in the day. I'm sure I saw it there. I saw where a principal would come in, a man I had trained to teach science, these men would be the first people... not black, white, red or yellow because by the time I started teaching, schools systems were integrated.

So, I had as many, um, uh, other- race men, or if they were, uh, looking to me for help in the classroom, but they would be the first people, actually, since you asked this question, put up for a promotion. Many of them stayed the same twenty-two years I did. And where I sidetracked into guidance, where it was actually female dominated, they went up the corporate ladder as department head, assistant

principal, management and the big whole scheme of education. Many of my friends, most of them have retired now, but many of them came out as principals, top leaders in education, if that's what you want to hear.

De Mare: That's interesting. But you didn't have an interest in going that route.

King: No. No, I didn't.

De Mare: It wasn't that you didn't feel it was open, you just didn't, you just didn't want to go that route.

King: No, I didn't.

De Mare: Ok.

Kelly: (unintelligible)

**00:34:58:14**-----

King: Glen L. Martin, in the early forties, as I see this sign, did not hire black workers. So... but in 1942 we were already working at Eastern Aircraft. So as a defense

worker we were picketing Glen L. Martin, Martin, to hire black people. I don't, uh, they said there'd be oh, seven hundred jobs that negro women and men could have if they were to be hired at Glen L. Martin. But I am to believe as a Baltimorean, when Glen L. Martin did open up, there was wholesale hiring. And what then, uh, what Eastern Aircraft did as soon as the war was over, your job was over. I'm sure the ladies told you that yesterday. The day the war was over- you had to hand over your jobs.

People continued to work at Glen L. Martin's, so the uh, segregation was a sign of the time because in the army, there was segregation. Black men weren't able to go to the front line. Black men stayed behind as cooks and some kind of desk jobs while the whites went out until the army/navy was integrated, I think that was under Truman, when they said that there was all of integration of army/navy. That came before the civil rights integration of 1954.

De Mare: If you think back to yourself as a young woman at that time, kind of, you know, your, during the war, can you talk back to what it was like? How you felt about the war itself at that time while you were working? Did you, um, did you know anyone or have any family in the service? Did you remember what it was like to be... can you just talk a

little bit about that time? And how being alive and living during the war was different than it is now?

King: During World War II, most things you can remember is everything was rationed. You couldn't buy up so many pairs of shoes, you couldn't buy so many pounds of sugar. You couldn't buy so much of eggs. But, coming out of a family of five, we never really ff... and not having an excessive amount of money, we never felt the rationing until we wanted to go out in the car. Gasoline coupons- gas was rationed. You couldn't, uh, have the tires for your car. They had to be re-treaded because tires were rationed. You didn't have, uh, too many silk stockings because everything was rationed.

You was standing on line for every thing. And as a young woman it would be kind of funny. You'd go downtown and you'd see a line, so you'd stand in another line because you figured at the end of the line there must be something you needed. So that was, uh, being young and not to have to take care of anybody... because we had enough to eat. We weren't hungry back home on Kerry Street.

Now, uh, how the war actually affected me, we didn't... we never... we were a family of girls. As you look around and uh, I had the one brother who had a heart condition so

he never went to the war, I had the one uncle who went to the war at an older age and he would come back and tell us stories. Never was anything good about how mean folk were to him in Georgia and Arizona and Texas. And, uh, we back home would always feel, "Why, we're, we're fighting for America. How can we fight for America when they don't even treat you like a human being?"

We were always told stories of how they brought the prisoners of war here, and let them eat at the counters down south but wouldn't let the black service men eat in count... in counters down south. But since that wasn't the Maryland thing, we probably did not see it and feel it as much as the southerners did. But during the war, and there were many, many black men who would rather be conscientious objectors than to go to fight for a war because they did not have any kind of equality back at home. And we're not talking about equality in education; we're talking about in jobs, we're talking about walking on one side of the street or the other.

So that's where, uh, we were with integration back in the day, and that went on through much of my college life. The year that I finished college in nineteen and fifty-four was the year that, uh, schools were supposed to integrate all the way through. So when I ride to Virginia soon after

that, all the schools were integrated without too much inci... incident in Virginia. I've never really traveled in the deep south. I been there, but I've never really traveled to learn the culture and how the war really im... imposed on those people, the people in the south. What I, what I see is what I read about.

But in Virginia the whites who did not want to send their kids to integrated school opened up academies. You had little academies up and down the highway. And the, those boys and girls when they got to be fifteen, sixteen dropped out of school; rather than to go to schools with black students. But as today, I don't see anything.

**00:40:44:03-----**

De Mare: When you see how things have shifted, um, I know last, yesterday, with the ladies that are of a certain age there was a, there was an energy... How do you... when you look at, like, your grandchildren, your great grandchildren, and the world that they're in now, I'm just curious how you feel... how you feel with things that have changed as much as they have and also not having changed in certain ways. If you can just, you know, what do you wish for them, um, when it comes to, uh, racial situations here in Baltimore and

also in this country... I'm just curious because you have a perspective that I don't have.

King: Uh, as for my great-grandchildren, I do wish to see an integrated, uh, Maryland. Uh, schools now are just as segregated, more segregated because in the black neighborhoods, black children go to school. The whites have particularly moved out of Baltimore City. Those who move back do not have children of school age or they're rich enough to send their children to private school. So when I go to the school around the corner I might see Asians, Hispanics, very few whites.

And uh, as I said, I lived in a Jewish community and I, when I worked up the street not too far away from here, and that high school I didn't see maybe three Jewish people out of two thousand people, because they send their children all to the Jewish schools up and down Park Heights.

So I would wish that when they talk about integration that we would really have integration. I don't know when we'll ever get it, as long as the city stays as it is. Where the blacks were, all run down, nobody occupying those. And as the blacks move out, they're not having babies to put into the schools. As the whites come back,

they're young professional. For instance, uh, uh, what's the... president, uh, last president's, now you know I've gotten so... the last president's daughter does live in Baltimore and she is a teacher. And uh, I'm sure, she doesn't have any babies to put back in to the system. And I see her on... Bush. Bush's daughter. She moved here to Baltimore, and she's a teacher, and she's young, and she would live in an integrated community.

So they're the people that are moving back and I don't know where, where we're going with this. While our schools are integrated staff-wise, because we've got, we've got Teach-for-America, and we've got the Filipinos, and we've got some real well-meaning, young, uh, uh, white and Hispanic teachers coming in to teach the blacks, but the students are not integrated; teachers are integrated.

**00:43:51:15-----**

Kelly: How do you, um, in terms of your, you know, being such an important part of World War II, and coming to this time of your life when we have a war, what are your, what are your feelings about the differences, or, in the... how people were feeling about the war then, and how people are feeling about, you know, how we're looking at war now?

King: In. in World War II, we did not have the, the press, the TV and the radio to keep any American abreast how terrible it was. We did not know until days later how many men had been slaughtered in the behalf of peace. I feel very badly about war. I think there is no such thing as fighting a war for peace. I think there's no such thing as fighting a war so they could, we can live free. You're killing too many people for what? To live free? No, I think there should be some other ways.

And when they say World War II, with all of the men they slaughtered on the beach my uncle tells me about, uh, what was really, what really came of it? All of the people that was killed when they dropped the first atomic bomb, I'm completely against it. If I had to talk to the president, "You're wrong!" Sure, the Japs... Japanese sneaked in and bombed Pearl Harbor. Well, we could've been fighting Japan. I, I cannot, I haven't been able to fathom our European involvement. I never, I will not be able to fathom our involvement in war today.

Regardless of who says it's right or who says it's wrong, I think there would've been another way around. We only are interested in American's casualties, but look at how many Americans are maimed; will come back blind, deaf,

dumb and become a burden to themselves and our society. Look at all the innocent people we've killed in the Gulf War, and in Afghanistan. It doesn't make sense. There has to be another way out.

I just feel very badly about wars, and as my good friend yesterday said, quoted the bible about wars and rumors of wars, it does not make it right. And I could hardly understand the people who quote the bible so glibly, don't even understand why they're quoting it. I mean, she doesn't really understand the depths of that passage. And it would've made for a good argument, but I just smiled because I figured well, you don't, you really even know what we talked about. You can't compare biblical time with today. So I guess that's it.

**00:46:56:12-----**

De Mare: Well, thank you for that. It's important because I think that there is such a sentimentality about the second world war...

King: Mm-hm.

De Mare: Um, a lot of people like to remember it as the best war, the good war, the greatest generation, and...

King: That's a sin.

De Mare: I think it's important that, that the voices that had a, that had a different perspective and a different experience are still heard 'cause they're getting written out of history.

King: Mm-hm.

De Mare: Um, so thank you for saying that. Um, um, if you, if you think back to your life, your time as, as a Rosie the Riveter, obviously you achieved your goal, you saved for college, you got yourself the education that you wanted. But is there anything that you would say to that young woman now, kind of with what you know in your life, if you look back, if you could say anything to yourself when you were eighteen and, and working so hard to, to, to get the money for college, is there anything you would like to tell her?

King: If I were to compare, um, the Rosies of yesterday, it'd do, it was just as far fetched for us to do what we're doing as the first woman to go up in space. What are they looking back? You look back and say, "I've done this. What have I added to the society of people? The planes that I helped to build were used for destructing a society." It never has said that we built any planes or did anything for the peace of the world. Now the woman up in space, it'll be years before she understands why she went in space. And I guess we're somewhere up there. Rosies actually did not know what they were doing and why they were doing it. They were doin' it, most of them were doin' it because of an income. And that's why I had not looked back and thought too much about it, but if I could compare us, I guess we were out there in space. We didn't know what we were doin', but we did it.

And I really would like to see the Rosies get as much, um, com, comment, what's the word? Much, uh, admiration for what they did as The Wax and The Waves. And now even though we might have been menial at the day because Rosies were not educated; The Wax and The Waves were and uh, when they talk about acknowledging people at the White House, I think somewhere in the agenda that the Rosies should be

acknowledged. And for the very fact that most of the, uh, some of the Rosies today don't know what to say.

But uh, the President's own grandmother was a Rosie. And uh, maybe that should be brought to this, this new day with new people in the White House. Then uh, Mrs. Obama and President Obama, to let them know that his grandmother was an important part in the history and he is a Rivet, and his children are Rosebuds. And maybe he might acknowledge the few Rosies that live. 'Cause there aren't too many of us around. And I had a letter that someone wrote from our chapter but it never got mailed, I think to George... to President Obama, explaining to him why we probably should be acknowledged along with the 99 Squadron and The Wax and The Waves at the White House. So that's where we are.

**00:50:26:18-----**

Kelly: Um, do you have any favorite story, or little, favorite memory about that time? A little funny story, or it could be a heart... you know... just any anecdote that you... you know... that you remember as like... you get a chuckle out of. So just...

King: I, sometimes I get a chuckle out of: on Friday evenings, my girlfriends and I would get dressed, put on our little socks and our saddle shoes, and go up on Gold Street to the USO. So my mother would say, "Why are y'all goin' up there? You don't know..."- and she used to call the, anybody out of Maryland or Virginia she'd call "the foreign boys"- "Y'all don't need to be goin' up and dancing with those foreign soldiers. You, you be- next thing you know you'll be coming back saying you're gonna' marry one of them." "No, Ma, we're just goin' to have some fun." 'Cause there was a USO on Gold Street and that's where we went.

Kelly: And what was the, um, were, was it a lot of couples dancing? Like, what was the dancing like that you...?

King: They bring, they bring in soldiers from, uh, Fort Meade and around the army camps. And the dance was the Jitterbug. Most of the time we would do, uh, not line dancing, was... the Lindy Hop and Jitterbug and Slow Dance. And just listen to music, and listen to find out where the boys were from. And being young and in Maryland and never traveled anywhere, if they said they were from Jamaica we'd have to wonder where in the world Jamaica was. "Why are

you in America fighting?" Not knowing that they might have been born in New York but their parents were Jamaican. And we would go along with the stories, so... My girlfriend's actually married to... those who went to work as Rosies with me actually married guys they had met at the USO.

Kelly: That's great. That's a really good story.

De Mare: That's a good story.