

## Episode 6 – Rosie the Riveter:

In 1990, I received an acknowledgement from **Amy Kesselman** in her book entitled “**Fleeting Opportunities**”, **Women Shipyard Workers** in Portland and Vancouver during **World War II** and **Reconversion**, published by State University of New York Press, Albany. Amy wrote about women shipyard workers in Portland and Vancouver. She tells about the life of a woman during World War II and how women were finally accepted into what was known as “**a man’s job**”. She has several quotes and little history from me in this book. **Amy wrote:**

1. Nona Pool grew up on a farm in Nebraska, and her father made her quit school “because he said it cost too much for a girl to go to school because they just go get married anyway. I was waiting to get married till I finished school,” she recalled, but “when my dad said quit school, I decided I’d get married then. I was tired of that farm life.”
2. “The average of men was pretty nice,” commented Nona Pool, “but there was a lot of hardheads that just didn’t have enough sense to pour sand out of a boot, and they thought that women were supposed to be pregnant and barefoot and ‘yes sir’.”
3. Nona pool recalled being informed by the union that women were being admitted because they needed the men, “but when the war was over, you was out!”
4. Layoffs intensified male hostility toward female shipyard workers. Nona pool, for example, and Oregon Ship Welder, had been riveting on the pontoons and was transferred back to the ways without any explanation in May 1945. “The yard,” she remembered, “was in turmoil.” Everyone was cranky there too. I hadn’t welded for so long, I was rusty – got “flack” from “all men crew” – told to go wash “didies” etc. I finally got to the ship supervisor and told him and he helped me get transferred back to the pontoons, as he said he saw no reason why I was singled out for the ways – “just some big shot shuffling.” I guess everyone was “out of sync” knowing the yard was in the process of shutting down.
5. Nona Pool said of her shipyard experience, “it made an industrial worker out of me.” Nona changed jobs nineteen times in attempts to find industrial work that used her mechanical ability and paid decently. She stopped working in 1959, but returned ten years later when her husband became terminally ill. When Nona’s husband first became sick, he said “all you’ll be able to get will be a babysitting job or housekeeping job, you now, after you’ve been off work that long.” I says, “you wanna bet?” {laughs} So I got me a telephone book and I found all the small manufacturers and I ask them, “Do you manufacture your product on-site?” And I called up asking ‘em, “here I am all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. You need me to help you do that work down there?” Nona worked at a variety of jobs, mostly poorly paid and unskilled. Sometime in the late

1950's she approached someone at Freightliner Corporation, the company that eventually hired her, and asked: "How about giving me a job welding?" And the guy, he turned around and looked at me and he kind of laughed and he says, "I wouldn't doubt you're a