

“ROSIE” KAY MORRISON

Richmond Kaiser Shipyard #2 Journeyman Welder 1943-1945



Catherine Stavros Morrison (Kay) was born in Chico, CA., on November 22, 1923. Kay and her husband Ray were married when she was a junior in high school. Catherine’s older brother was in the Army, serving in the African campaign chasing Rommel and her husband was eager to join the service too but the military classified him as “4F” - unable to serve due to health reasons. After her graduation in 1941 they moved to the Bay Area to search for work in the war effort, finding an apartment on Haight and Fillmore in San Francisco and Ray was able to find work right away in Kaiser Shipyard #2 as a Shipwright (carpenter).



Kay was discouraged from working because of a sign in the window of the Union hall that read “No Women or Blacks Wanted”. By 1943 Kay was determined to work so she returned to the Union hall to apply for a job, which she got this time, becoming a Welder. She requested just two things; to work in Kaiser Shipyard #2 and that she work the graveyard shift (so she could be with her husband!). Kay had no idea what a welder was but would soon learn by attending welding school for 2 weeks. Kay and her husband commuted to work together via the ferry from San Francisco to Richmond. After 3 months on the job she took the Government’s Navy Welding test where she passed with flying colors and became a certified Journeyman Welder. Her wages went from \$0.90 an hour to \$1.38 an hour!



When you became a Journeyman Welder, you’ve excelled in flat, vertical, and overhead welding. Kay welded on the assembly, large sections moved by crane, to the ships that were being built in the Way. She worked the graveyard shift, from 11pm to 7am, six days a week. One time she was fortunate enough to be asked to attend the launching of a ship she had worked on. Being a part of that experience made her feel proud and patriotic. Kay welded from 1943 to August 1945, when the war ended. The men returning from war had first right to jobs back at home so Kay was laid off. Ray went on to work at Moore’s



Shipyard and Bethlehem Steel.



In the years following the war, they would have two children, Ray would eventually go in to the laundry business, and Kay worked for Bank of America for over 30 years, retiring in 1984 as manager. Kay and Ray have 6 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren and were married for 64 years until his passing

in 2004. She looks fondly on her days as a Rosie, and feels privileged to have been given the opportunity to promote women and the war effort. She continues to carry that patriotic feeling by volunteering every Friday at the Rosie the Riveter WW II Home Front National Park.

