

VOLUNTEERS RESTORE ROSIE THE
RIVETER'S VICTORY SHIP**HON. GEORGE MILLER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 2000

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the House of Representatives unanimously passed my legislation to create a Rosie the Riveter National Historic Park in Richmond, CA. H.R. 4063, which has been the subject of a hearing also in the Senate Energy Committee, would honor all those who served, in uniform and in coveralls, wearing helmets or bandanas, hoisting a machine gun or a welder's torch.

Rosie the Riveter is, in the words of the National Park Service, "the most remembered icon of the civilian work force that helped win World War II and has a powerful resonance in the women's movement." Rosie has been commemorated on posters, in the famous Norman Rockwell painting, and on a U.S. postage stamp. She remains one of the most enduring images of the Second World War.

Another icon does remain that is worth remembering and preserving is one of the 747 ships that the Rosies—and the Wendys and Welder—constructed at the Richmond Kaiser shipyards: the Red Oak Victory, one of the last surviving Victory ships that served in World War II. Eventually, the Red Oak Victory will play a crucial and permanent role in the National Historic Park. Today, she is being carefully restored by a small navy of volunteers that is stripping paint, cleaning rust, and reconstructing this legacy of the greatest war in history.

I want to pay tribute to the men and women who are volunteering their time to spruce up the Red Oak Victory so that future generations of residents, visitors and students can learn first hand about the home front efforts to win the war and the tremendous economic, demographic and social changes generated by the war effort.

The San Francisco Chronicle has published an account of the restoration effort, and I would like to share that report with my colleagues.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle, July 27, 2000]

ROSIE REVISITED—VOLUNTEER CREW IS RESTORING A WORLD WAR II VICTORY SHIP, REMNANT OF RICHMOND'S SHIPYARDS

(By Chip Johnson)

Every Tuesday for the past year, Owen Olson has left his Daly City home and stepped back in time aboard the Red Oak Victory, a World War II relic being brought back to life on the Richmond waterfront.

At 79 years old, the retired U.S. Navy lieutenant dons a pair of coveralls and safety glasses, and climbs down into the bowels of the ship's engine room to strip off layer upon layer of lead-based paint. His face streaked with oil, he is a Norman Rockwell image of an engine-room grease monkey.

Olson is one of the 30 volunteers, many of them retirees, who show up to paint, weld and repair the aging vessel. It is the only ship still afloat from Richmond's giant Kaiser Shipyards—a remnant of the glory days when 747 ships were built there during the war.

One day, they hope, the vessel will be docked at the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Park in Richmond. The Rosie memorial, a 400-foot-long wall shaped like a section of a Victory ship, will tell the story of the working women—and men—of World War II. It is scheduled to be unveiled at a dedication ceremony in mid-October.

Meanwhile, about 7,000 feet of space at the old Ford plant, which built 60,000 tanks during the war, will be converted into a visitor center near where the Red Oak Victory would be docked in the future.

The visitor center will provide information about the shipyards, the tank factory and other World War II-era sites in Richmond as well as war-factory sites in Massachusetts, Washington, Michigan, Ohio, New York, Louisiana and Connecticut.

When the park is approved by Congress, it will become eligible for funding from the National Park Service. The visitor center is scheduled to be completed in two years.

Meanwhile, there is a lot of work to be done on the Red Oak Victory, whose restoration must be funded by grants and donations in addition to the sweat of volunteers who hope to have the job finished in two years.

On his weekly trip to Richmond, Olson is joined by a collection of aging wise guys and characters who look like they were typecast for a remake of "McHale's Navy," a 1960s TV sitcom.

The crew is clearly more comfortable aboard the ship—a rusting giant cargo vessel pulled from the mothball fleet at Suisun Bay two years ago—than they are on land. Some of the officers' quarters have been restored by a volunteer group from Clearlake in Lake County, but the rusting exterior decks and walls of the ship need the most attention.

Mike Huntsinger, a career merchant sailor, serves as the chief mate. His job is to coordinate the tasks on the ship and perform a mechanical assessment of the ship's condition. A detailed 60-page restoration report has just been submitted to a firm that will estimate the cost of repairing the 441-foot vessel.

"The objective is to restore it to an operating vessel and make it look like it did the day it was launched," he said.

Right now, the boat is docked in Brickyard Cove Marina at an old city-owned dock, Terminal 9. She is a rusting gray lady, but there are signs of life aboard her. A gigantic winch used to load one of the ship's four huge cargo holds has been restored and is now operational.

The 5mm and 20mm guns aboard the vessel, which was used to ferry supplies to soldiers fighting the Japanese, lie on the deck until the day they are mounted on the gun tubs on the bow and stern of the ship.

But making the Red Oak Victory whole again will take far more than the elbow grease and old sea stories that Olson and J.P. Irvin, his mate in the engine room, or chief engineer Bill Jackson can muster.

The cost is staggering—about \$3 million to \$4 million worth of mechanical repairs would require the giant vessel to be dry-docked. An equally long list of cosmetic work, including a stem-to-stern paint job, would also require a substantial investment, he said.

Sea valves in the ship's hull that once allowed ocean water inside to cool the engines have been welded shut. The propeller needs to be balanced, auxiliary generators could use an overhaul, and ultrasound tests must be performed on the hull, just to name a few things, Huntsinger said.

"We'll pare down from there and see what the real world gives us," he said.

Lois Boyle, president of the Richmond Museum of History, which owns the boat, will try to raise money through federal transportation grants, corporate sponsors—including Kaiser Permanente, whose parent company built the vessel—and hundreds of others.

The museum has also applied to have the ship placed on the National Register of Historic Places, which would qualify it for funding.

Despite its state of disrepair, the Red Oak Victory—named after the tiny town in Iowa that suffered the heaviest losses per capita in World War II—was a working merchant ship in the Vietnam War before being decommissioned in 1969.

Jackson, a veteran seaman who sailed for 53 years, knows the feeling. The 82-year-old Oakland native was living in Costa Rica with a new wife and new son when he got a call in 1990 from an old sea buddy to help run a steam-powered supply ship in Operation Desert Storm.

A few years later, Jackson returned to Oakland, where he lives with family members and spends his days aboard the Red Oak Victory.

"I love this ship and the sea and the friendships with the men that have sailed them over the years," he said.

He must love ships because during World War II, he had two of them torpedoed from underneath him. He survived, but suffered injuries aboard the Courageous, which was sunk off the coast of Trinidad.

The Red Oak Victory has become a rallying point for old sailors and history buffs alike, a place where they can work and reminisce and shave 30 years away.

Huntsinger remembers the feeling he had the first time he saw the ship.

"I saw the mast from the highway, came aboard and the memories came flooding back," he said.

As much as he and the rest enjoy the work, they will never turn away volunteers.

"I have a love for these old ships," said Rolly Hauck, 77 a retired salesman from Novato who served in the merchant fleet.

He and his compatriots have but one collective wish when it comes to the Red Oak Victory.

"I want to see this ship live again," Hauck said.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
ASSISTANCE AND BILL OF
RIGHTS ACT OF 2000

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES H. MALONEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 2000

Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 10th anniversary of the Americans with Disability Act, which has helped all our fellow Americans to realize their full potential. In this regard, I was pleased to attend a ceremony last month here in the U.S. Capitol Building at which Pitney Bowes, a worldwide leader in messaging technology based in Connecticut, received the Blinded American Veterans Foundation's Corporate Award for their development of the Universal Access Copies.

This revolutionary copier incorporates many leading technologies, including the first-ever use of advanced speech recognition in a copier. This speech recognition software can