



Photo Courtesy of Sherna Gluck

The idea that housewives tossed aside aprons and scrub brushes to grab factory jobs in a patriotic effort to help win WW II is a myth, says oral historian Sherna Gluck who is studying war workers.

Historian studies working women

Research exposes myths

By NANCYANN LOFGREN
Of the Emerald

"Rosie the Riveter" reluctantly put down her powder puff to work in the factories when men picked up guns to fight World War II, so the legend goes.

And when the men put down their guns and returned home, Rosie gladly went home to experience motherhood.

This legend of Rosie, who personifies World War II women workers, is being explored by Sherna Gluck in an oral history of Southern California war workers.

Gluck spoke about the history project at the University Friday afternoon and led an oral history workshop Saturday. Her project is being supported by a Rockefeller Foundation grant, with promised matching funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Since June 1979, Gluck, a women's studies professor and coordinator of the Oral Studies Resource Center at Cal State Long Beach, has contacted 150 women who worked in aircraft, rubber and electrical companies during World War II. She says she expects to contact 500

women war workers, from which she will choose 75 to 100 for in-depth interviews.

The myth that Rosie worked in a "brief patriotic fervor where she was glad to do her part and then went into the home," is false, Gluck says, adding that "for one thing a lot of them didn't come out of the home, and they didn't go back."

Her research shows that half the women war workers were already part of the work force; 30 percent came from the home and the rest were young women from high school and college.

In 1944, the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor interviewed 13,000 women in war production areas and found that 80 percent of the women wanted to continue in the work they were doing, Gluck says.

Of the women who came from the home, 68 percent didn't want to quit working, and many of them continued to work, she says.

These women learned self-confidence, and it changed their lives, Gluck says. Their fears of failure faded as they found they could do their jobs well.

But this change was not felt universally, because at the time it was difficult to integrate that change into the social structure.

The propaganda of the time

carried the theme that "we need you for patriotic reasons, but don't forget it's just for the duration of the war," Gluck says.

The literature after the war urged women back home to propagate the world.

"If we are to have an adequate birth rate, we must hear less talk about women's rights and more about their duty to the race," the San Francisco Chronicle's "This Week" magazine urged in 1945. "Women must give up their jobs. There is other work for them to do — women's work."

The literature said juvenile delinquency was rampant and children were running wild in the streets, Gluck says.

The job market shrank after the war, and men returned to their seniority positions as the industry shifted from war goods to consumer goods.

Women who were elevated from domestic positions to higher-paying factory jobs during the war felt bitter about their displacement, Gluck says.

Gluck's research seeks to dispel the myth that women now taking "non-traditional roles" are pioneers. Instead, they are a cyclical example in a history since colonial times of women working in non-traditional roles depending on the needs of the economy, Gluck says.

Board calls for credit inquiry

The State Board of Higher Education authorized Friday a "vigorous investigation" of bogus credit problems throughout Oregon state system colleges and universities.

State system Chancellor Roy Lieuallen recommended the investigation because "my view is that the problem is major and a vigorous investigation should be pursued."

"The integrity of the University demands that any ethical (and legal) lapses in the institution be identified and appropriate sanctions be applied."

Lieuallen added that he is "especially concerned about three features of this current unfortunate mess. First, how can we prevent in the future the flagrant compromise of academic integrity represented by the accumulation of bogus credits?"

"Second, have any of our employees been involved in any illegal activities, such as gambling on the outcome of games and/or use of public resources for personal benefit?"

"And third, to what extent, if any, have our employees violated the tradition of trust which is a *sine qua non* of an academic community?"

Lieuallen added that University of Oregon Pres. William Boyd and Oregon State University Pres. Robert McVicar have kept the state system staff informed about the credit scandals at their institutions.

Opinions on how to handle the bogus credit scandal within the state system vary, Lieuallen said.

"Some believe we are making a mountain out of a molehole. Others are equally vehement that we are trying to push a large-sized problem under the rug."

In other business the board:

- Equalized dormitory rates at all state system institutions. According to board studies, University dorm residents will pay from \$2 to \$12 more per year while OSU dorm residents can expect to pay from \$12 to \$34 more per year.

- Established a new instructional unit, the American English Institute, at the University.



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