



NPS Women Cartes de Visite Collection



Betty Reid Soskin, 2017. (NPS Photo).

Betty Reid Soskin

Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front Park

2007-Present

- Born in September 1921 in Detroit, Michigan.
- Spent her early childhood in New Orleans until the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, after which the family resettled in Oakland, California.
- In 1941, took a job as a clerk for the all-Black auxiliary of a segregated boil makers union.
- Married Melvin Reid in 1943 and raised 4 children.
- Worked at Reid's Records, founded by her husband in 1945.
- Recalled racism directed towards her family when they moved to a home in the Walnut Creek, California suburb in the 1950s. These acts of racism "radicalize[d her] politically."
- In 1972, divorced Melvin and married Bill Soskin.
- Worked with city council members and mayors to help develop low-income housing across Berkeley, CA.
- Worked for Assemblywoman Dion Aroner in Richmond, CA and became acquainted with the NPS.
- In 2000, as a field representative for Aroner, she attended a meeting for the new Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front Park.
- Served as an official representative for the city of Richmond and Aroner during the planning sessions for the new park in 2003, advocating for a more inclusive and accurate story.
- In 2007, at 85 years old, became a permanent interpretive park ranger at the park.
- Her interpretive programs came to include her personal story and family experiences, from her great-grandmother who was born into slavery, to her present-day self, encompassing 150 years of history in a single lived memory.
- Named California's Woman of the Year in 1995 and in 2015 she introduced President Obama at the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.
- Remains the National Park Service's oldest active park ranger.

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