

Veterans Day Aboard the SS Red Oak Victory

Hundreds packed the partly restored World War II cargo ship in Richmond Friday to honor and celebrate veterans.

- By [Soren Hemmila](#)



Veterans Day aboard the SS Red Oak Victory ship
Supervisor John Gioia, with Mariam Sauer, an original Rosie the Riveter, help re-christen SS Red Oak Victory ship in Richmond, Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2011.

A large-than-expected crowd attended a Veterans Day event aboard the SS Red Oak Victory in Richmond Friday. The Chevron-sponsored gathering honored those who served abroad in America's armed services as well as those who supported the war effort at home.

With the threat of rain, the ceremony was moved inside the Red Oak. Hundreds packed into the hull of the cargo vessel to listen to stories of Richmond during the war years.

An original "Rosie the Riveter" was on hand to help re-christen the Kaiser-built vessel. Richmond native Mariam Sauer, along with Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia and Richmond Vice Mayor Tom Butt, smashed a champagne bottle to reenact the 1944 launch of the munitions carrier.

The ship recently underwent extensive repairs in dry dock and received a fresh coat of paint. According to the Richmond Museum of History, the Red Oak is the Victory ship from the Richmond shipyard that is being restored.

Russ Yarrow of Chevron detailed the role the Richmond refinery played during World War II. The refinery won numerous production and development awards during the war. It developed special submarine lubricants and produced 100 octane aviation fuel necessary for America's war effort.

"Richmond became a city of 100,000 people that never slept for four years," Yarrow said.

Lois Boyle of the Richmond Museum Association shared some of the accomplishments of

women during the war and a story of Henry J. Kaiser envisioning the shipyards on the muddy flats of the bay in Richmond. “We honor our dead best when we remember their sacrifice,” she said in conclusion.

Gioia spoke of his father, a Korean War Veteran, whom he said further served his country by becoming a high school teacher in Richmond. “Thank all of you who served as veterans and on the home front,” Gioia said.

The mayor of Richmond, Gayle McLaughlin, touched off a small controversy that [Fox News](#) picked up on when she announced she would skip the Veterans Day celebration at the Red Oak Victory to attend an Occupy movement event. The mayor was not in attendance the ship event, while Richmond Councilmen Corky Booze' and Nate Bates did participate in the Red Oak gathering, along with Vice Mayor Butt.