

Debra Vaca

From: Jacqueline Vaca
Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2008 9:20 AM
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Subject: In the News: Richmond's Shoreline Parks - SF Chron

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Richmond Shoreline Parks: Trails and history

Gail Todd

Thursday, January 31, 2008

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Perfect for walking or biking, the Richmond Marina Bay segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail leads visitors along a string of miniature parks connected by a glistening shoreline with panoramic views of the bay. Only a few yards from Richmond homes, the parks offer encounters with gulls, terns, plovers, whimbrels, avocets, coots and ducks along the shore and in the nearby salt marshes. Highlights include markers along the trail that reveal the rich history of the many African Americans and others who flocked to Richmond during World War II to fight the war on the home front. Another highlight is the Rosie the Riveter memorial in Marina Bay Park.

Shimada Peace Park to Vincent Park: The walk begins at the Shimada Peace Memorial Park, named after Richmond's sister city of Shimada, Japan. Notice the three beautiful travertine stones of the central monument depicting heaven, earth and humanity. As you leave the park and walk toward Marina Bay (the shore will be on your left), enjoy the views of the Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. Concrete steps take you to the water's edge.

Vincent Park to Marina Bay Park: Vincent Park, at the entrance to Marina Bay, offers gorgeous views, a great kiddie playground and fishing opportunities. Be sure to take a look at the Shipyard Stories sculpture, a model of a Liberty Ship smokestack covered with stories and photographs of the men and women who worked in the shipyards during World War II. Fat Canada geese wander through the park. When you leave the park, you will enter Richmond's Marina Bay.

Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park (Marina Bay Park): During World War II, the four Kaiser Richmond shipyards operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to build 747 Liberty and Victory

ships. People flocked to Richmond from all parts of the United States, swelling Richmond's population from less than 25,000 to more than 100,000. For the first time, African Americans, women and Asian Americans worked in well-paying jobs together with whites to produce ships for the Navy. The Memorial Park is on the site of Kaiser Richmond Shipyard No. 2.

The Rosie the Riveter Memorial itself honors the 6 million American women who worked in industrial jobs during the war. A 1942 song, "Rosie the Riveter," helped popularize the symbol of women in overalls doing work that had previously been done only by men. The 441-foot memorial, the length of a liberty ship, represents a ship in the process of being built. The walkway running the memorial's length provides a World War II timeline, with oral history, photographs and drawings.

Lucretia Edwards Park to the Ford Assembly Plant: Continuing around the shoreline, you will come to Amini's by the Bay, where you can grab sandwiches and drinks. Eat here or take your sandwiches to one of the picnic tables at Lucretia Edwards Shoreline Park.

This park, at the mouth of Marina Bay, pays further tribute to the contributions of the Bay Area shipyards to the World War II war effort. You can stand in bootprints and sit on low walls that orient you toward the various shipyards. Walk a little farther along the shore to view the Ford Assembly building, an impressive example of industrial architecture with architect Albert Kahn's trademark large windows. During World War II, the Ford plant produced jeeps and other military vehicles. When renovated, this building will house the Rosie the Riveter World War II/ Home Front National Historical Park visitor center and museum.

Alternative route back: To return by a different route, when you return to the Rosie the Riveter Memorial, take the segment of the trail that leads from the back of the memorial. It will cross Marina Bay Parkway and run along Meeker Tidal Creek, which flows through coastal salt marsh. When the trail rejoins the shoreline segment of the Marina Bay Trail, turn right to return to Shimada Park. If you want to walk another mile or so, turn left and cross a bridge to continue to Point Isabel Regional Shoreline Park, an off-leash dog park. Here you can rest and have a light lunch at the Sit & Stay Café.

Getting there: To drive to Shimada Peace Park, from San Francisco or Oakland, take Interstate 580 west to the Marina Bay Parkway/South 23rd Street exit. Turn left onto Marina Bay Parkway and continue for 1.2 miles to Shimada Peace Park. Turn left into the parking lot.

From Marin County, drive over the Richmond San Rafael Bridge. You will be on I-580 east. Exit on Marina Bay Parkway/South 23rd Street. Turn right onto Marina Bay Parkway and continue for 1.2 miles to Shimada Peace Park. Turn left into the parking lot.

By public transit: Take BART to the Richmond station, get a transfer, then exit the station and walk

to the southwest corner of 21st Street and Macdonald Avenue. Take the AC Transit bus No. 74 to Regatta Boulevard and Sea Drift Drive at Marina Bay Park (Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park). From here you can backtrack to Vincent and Shimada Peace Park.

More information: To download a detailed trail map, go to links.sfgate.com/ZCHE.

Where's your favorite Urban Outing? To suggest a spot, contact Gail Todd, a longtime Bay Area resident, tour leader for San Francisco City Guides, and author of Lunchtime Walks in Downtown San Francisco. Urban Outings are presented by Greenbelt Alliance, which is celebrating its 50th year in 2008. Greenbelt Alliance is the Bay Area's advocate for open spaces and vibrant places. For more Urban Outings as well as Greenbelt Outings, visit www.greenbelt.org/outings.

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This article appeared on page G - 31 of the San Francisco Chronicle