

Experiencing Operation Homecoming

Johanna Heimerl joined the Navy in June of 1963. Since an early age, Johanna aspired to enlist in the Navy and be on the front line. However, during the 1960s, women were not allowed to serve on the front line unless they were nurses. In 1973, Johanna handled administrative work for Operation Homecoming, which welcomed the return of prisoners of war (POWs) back to United States.



Watch Johanna Heimerl's oral history, as she describes her experience during Operation Homecoming and what she felt during this time. The video is available on YouTube at: <https://tinyurl.com/JohannaHeimerl> or you can click directly on this QR code from your smartphone or tablet (using either a QR reader app or your phone's camera).



Questions to consider:

1. What is the importance of oral histories? Would you consider these accounts to be artifacts? Why or why not?
2. How do you think POWs felt when they returned to the United States?
3. Why do you think the crowd reacted as they did to the plane coming in to land?
4. Why do you think Johanna refers to Operation Homecoming as her "utopian tour of duty"?
5. Do you think Johanna's participation in Operation Homecoming helped to make up for her inability to go to Vietnam? Why or why not?
6. How are job opportunities for women in the Navy different now than they were in the 1960s?