

# Searching for Rosie: A call for Rosie the Riveters



Local Rosies Opal Nelson, Doris Graham and Alice Heiney ring a bell for Rosie with Yvonne Fasold earlier this year.

**By Caitlyn May**  
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Yvonne Fasold leafs through the table of contents, rattling off names.

Doris Graham worked typing war bonds. Bettie Jean Furness Layman was a driver in the south and once drove Sammie Davis Jr., who couldn't stay overnight in the town he was performing in. Opal Nelson. Carol Souter Ferguson. Alice Heiney was an ammunition inspector. She just celebrated her 100th birthday.

Fasold knows the pages and stories of "Rosie the Riveter Stories: How they did it" by heart because she helped write it, driven by an urgency she says has only increased as a generation of women who manned the home front, passes away. In January of this year, the "real" Rosie the Riveter Naomi Parker Fraley—made famous by the "We Can Do It" poster—died at 96.

"These women are very humble," Fasold said. "After the war they just went back to their lives and didn't give a thought to the role they played. But the efforts on the home front helped win the war."

Between 1940 and 1945, one in four American women worked outside of the home and not necessarily driving rivets. Women filled positions on farms and factories taking positions as welders, drivers, parachute packers, railroad workers, ammunition inspectors, typists for war bonds and plane spotters. Not every Rosie was a riveter.

It's a message the American Rosie the Riveter Association (ARRA) is trying to get out as it plans its 20th anniversary gathering in New Orleans set for this June. The group is working to identify as many living Rosies as possible as it takes on a slew of projects aimed at recognizing

the effort of women in the workforce during World War II.

"We want to find them," Fasold, a former ARRA president, said. "There are women who may not know that they qualify as a Rosie." Fasold's own mother, a welder during the war who has since passed away, thought her service did not qualify for the ARRA. "They just don't know," Fasold said.

Acting correspondent secretary for ARRA Mabel Myrick has sent out a call for Rosies asking that women attend the 20th anniversary in New Orleans. "These women are now in their 90s and we would like to have as many of them as possible," she wrote in a letter urging women to step forward.

Cottage Grove boasts three active Rosies—Opal Nelson, Alice Heiney and Doris Graham—who attend events and give presentations around the state with Fasold. Their latest, scheduled this week at North Eugene High School.

Nelson, 94, has stated previously that she was "surprised" people are still interested in Rosie the Riveters.

It's a mindset Fasold says is common among the Rosies.

"They were serving their country. That's how they see it," she said.

For that service, ARRA is lobbying Congress to bestow a Congressional gold medal on the Rosies. The act, sponsored by California Representative Jackie Speier and Pennsylvania Senator Andrew Casey, would award the women who worked

on the home front and acknowledge "their contributions to the nation and the inspiration they provided."

National Rosie the Riveter Day was celebrated for the first time last year on March 21.

"We just want to recognize these women," Fasold said, interrupted by tears. "It brings me joy being able to go with them and hear them tell their stories. So, ask your grandmother, your mother. I think people will be surprised to find out that maybe they were Rosies."

To join ARRA, visit [rosiethe-](http://rosiethe-riveter.net)

[riveter.net](http://riveter.net) or contact Fasold at [fasold@uoregon.edu](mailto:fasold@uoregon.edu).





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