

Real-life Rosies:




The Women of WWII

Stories Collected by
Lisa Smelser

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*I would like to dedicate this book to the often-unsung heroes of World War II,
the Real-life Rosies,
especially those that I have been fortunate enough to know through their stories.
Thank you once again.*

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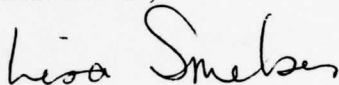
May 27, 2003

Dear Real-life Rosie:

Hello! I have finally completed my Rosie book! Enclosed is a copy for you in return for your much-appreciated help. I still might make a website, but for right now, all I'm worried about is summer vacation. I get to go to FBLA Nationals in Dallas, as well as Girls State, and a camp in Colorado to learn about electric cooperatives. The best thing is that they're all free!

Thanks once again!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Smelser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Lisa" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while the last name "Smelser" is written in a larger, more expansive script with a prominent loop at the end.

Lisa Smelser

Norma Louise (Haas) Robbins was born in October of 1919 in Muncie, Indiana. She had one older sister and three younger sisters. She graduated from Muncie Central High School in 1938 at the age of 18. She started working as a babysitter, then got a job at Ball Brothers, makers of the Ball fruit jars. She met her husband, Walter, at the local roller rink. He went into the Army that December, and they were wed in May of 1943 when he came home on furlough. She tells of her experience.



I was working for the Navy in the defense plant in Muncie. We made 30mm shells. I don't remember how much I made, but was happy to help my country during the war. I worked the day [shift]—7 am to 3:30 pm. I was a Navy inspector. I wore slacks. They had Navy uniforms, but I chose to wear my own clothes which we could do if we wanted to. I met two of my best friends while working there. We were friends until they passed away this year.

The male coworkers were very supportive of me, they had worked there for years and were very good to help me understand the way to do things. I just wanted to do my part to help the war effort, since my husband was doing his part fighting for all of us.

I quit work to join Walter in Arizona. I stayed in a hotel for two weeks and saw him twice while I was there. He was moved to Fort Carson in Colorado, so I went back to be with him. We had a small apartment and he came to be with me every night. I met girls from all over the U.S. Some I still keep in contact with. I came home in September 1943, our son was born December 28, 1944. His dad didn't get to see him till he was seven months old because he [Walter] was sent overseas in September. He was wounded in action in the first of December 1944. We were in the hospital at the same time, only many, many miles apart. Later, the next year, he and four other soldiers got to go to meet the Russians on the other side of the river.

I did not go to work after the wars. Walter came home on my birthday in 1945. We bought a small home as a starter. We kept busy, buying homes, had our second son in October 1946, and moved soon after to our five-acre farm. We had one cow—I was never going to milk a cow. I didn't for quite a while. Then we bought a 25-acre farm. I did learn to milk cows. It was there that we had our beautiful daughter.



Norma and Walter eventually moved to a 110-acre farm, but sold that after buying a motel in Muncie. She says, "We met people from all over the world and I'll say, 99% of the people are good, but that 1% is a different story." They sold the motel and retired, and have three children, five grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.