

ELINOR OTTO ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Fellow award recipients, Chairman Parker, honored guests, and ladies and gentlemen,

I'm deeply honored to receive this very special Lifetime Achievement Award from the Air Force Association.

I would like to accept this Award on behalf of the 19 million women who worked on the Home Front to help America and its Allies achieve victory in World War II, and who are collectively referred to as "Rosie the Riveters."

These women not only helped win the war by building airplanes, ships, vehicles and other equipment. They also showed that women - if given the opportunity - were capable of doing jobs that had been traditionally reserved for men. We women had to rapidly master new skills and technology necessary to doing this work during the wartime, and in the process helped pave the way for greater opportunities for women in the workplace.

I also want to congratulate the men and women of the United States Air Force who are here tonight to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the formation of the US Air Force on September 18, 1947.

I am very proud to have been part of the heritage of the Air Force from its earliest days when as a young 22- year old I began building parts for Rohr Aircraft in 1942. I put my rivet gun down for the last time just a few weeks after my 95th birthday, when Boeing closed its plant in Long Beach where worked for just a few months shy of 50 years building the more than (number?) of C17's for nearly 50 years.

I feel very fortunate to have been able to continue working long after most folks retire and to have had the opportunity to experience first hand some of the exciting changes that have taken place in the aviation industry.

If the plant hadn't shut down, I think I'd still be working fulltime on the assembly line. I still get up at 4 AM to fix my morning coffee. I live in my own home, and still drive my own car (I just got my license renewed, and plan to get it renewed again when I'm 100!).

Now that I have a bit more free time on my hands, I'm doing what I can to help ensure that the role the Rosie the Riveters played during WWII is remembered so that our legacy can help inspire future generations of women – especially young girls of today who will be competing for the careers and jobs in the highly competitive global economy of the future.

I recently became the honorary chairwoman for an exciting campaign to create a living memorial to the Rosie's in the form of a national network of rose gardens.

The gardens will feature a new official Rosie the Riveter Rose that will be available for planting early next year. The goal is to have a Rose Garden in each Congressional District in time for the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII in 2020.

In closing, I want to say how pleased I am to see that companies like Boeing are making special efforts to encourage women to prepare for career opportunities in the aerospace and related industries.

These young women can be 21st century Rosie's, capable of contributing to, and benefiting from, the rapidly changing technology economy that they are going to be living in.

We women who worked on the Home Front made history. Now it's YOUR turn!

We Can Do It ... Again!

I want to thank the Board of Directors of the Air Force Association again for this very special Award, and to wish the US Air Force a happy 70th Birthday!



