

Blanche Mericle

1917 - 2014

Good friend of the museum Blanche Mericle passed away on January 3rd at the age of 96. She was one of three women known as Rosie the Riveter at the Willow Run Bomber Plant. In 1945, the arrival of daughter Lorelee ended her employment.

Blanche's husband Ken worked for Kaiser-Frazer as a driver. His services were used by the Frazer family and for the Willow Cottage. When Kaiser or Frazer cars were purchased through the company, the buyer picked his car up at the Willow Cottage. It also was a public relations front for the company.

In addition to Ken's employment, Blanche was connected to Kaiser-Frazer through the Seaway Region Kaiser-Frazer Owner' Club. In 1964, she and Ken started the Seaway Region. She was manager of the club for 38 years. Her husband Ken ran the meets until he died, Blanche then took over the responsibility. While the number of people and cars attending meets fell off over the years, her enthusiasm for the club did not. She also participated in Kaiser Frazer Owners Club International shows all over the country.

Her nephews referred to her as their "Little Hotte," she was small in frame and stature but was big on smiles and talking about Kaiser Frazer car shows.

In June of 2013, Blanche and two other Willow Ron Rosie the Riveters returned to the Bomber Plant for the first time since the war. "I want to go to work!" said Blanche as the bay doors of the plant opened. As the doors finished their climb, Blanche's eyes opened wide as memories flooded back. "It was hot in here," she said, strolling carefully into the plant with her nephew providing stability. "The afternoon shift was better because of the air. Where's my crew? We can go to work now," she said with a smile.