

# Salem Nurse Honor Guard

A tribute to Retha Rethmeier

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Tribute date: May 12, 2026

*This is an excerpt from the service:*

Nursing is a calling, a way of life. The Salem Nurse Honor Guard is here today to honor Retha Rethmeier for her life as a nurse.

Retha went into nursing right after high school and met her husband, Rip, who was active in the U.S. Navy. They started their family in South Dakota, but then moved to Eastern Oregon, where Retha worked in the local hospital as an OB/GYN nurse.



SNHG from left to right: Donna Rue, Tamara Wheeldon, Lisa Haddock, Dana Hart, Lori Phillips, Cris Hatzenbihler

After working in the hospital for several years, Retha went to work in a medical clinic. She thoroughly enjoyed her clinical duties and was full of stories regaling her time being the only nurse with ten doctors and the different procedures and minor surgeries they performed, such as tonsillectomies. Retha and Rip relocated to St. Helens and then Scappoose, where they lived for several years and Retha began her long career working with the American Red Cross in the blood collection division.

Many years later, while in nursing school herself, daughter Jodi recalls her mom talking her through her first blood draw — while on the phone!!!

Jodi is fond of saying that if anyone can get blood out of a turnip, it's her MOM! Retha retired from the American Red Cross after 30 years and she is remembered, not by her years as a nurse, but by the difference she made during those years by stepping into people's lives, by special moments. Retha was there.

