

The American women behind World War II were 'the quiet heroes'

BY CARLI TEPROFF

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SHARE

Judy Gilbert Gould, daughter of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation founder, Stanley Myers, remembers growing up in Miami during World War II. BY JOSÉ A. IGLESIAS

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, women suddenly took on pivotal roles supporting America's war effort, whether working on the factory floor, manning USO centers or enlisting in the armed services.

Approximately 400,000 American women served in the U.S. military between 1942-46, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1941.

For those women who served beyond the military, many helped to make ships, planes and munitions to support the troops. In fact, by 1943, women accounted for 65 percent of the workforce in the U.S. aircraft industry, up from only 1 percent prior to the war, according to History.com

In South Florida, women pitched in to help the thousands of soldiers who trained in Miami Beach before being shipped overseas, volunteering with the American Red Cross and the National Council of Jewish Women.

"They were the quiet heroes in this story," said Paul George, a Miami historian. "The support they gave was unreal, both hands on and behind the scenes."

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum along with McClatchy, the Miami Herald, Miami Dade College and the National Women History Museum, will explore women's role in the war during a special program on Thursday, *How did American women act? Heroism on the home front*.

The discussion, which is free and open to the public, will be at 7 p.m. at Miami Dade College (Wolfson Campus, 254 NE Fourth St., in the Chapman Conference Center (Building 3, second floor).

When the United States entered the war after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941, a date President Franklin Roosevelt declared "will live in infamy," South Florida transformed into a military hub.

By 1942, Miami Beach had turned into a training ground for soldiers across the country. At the peak of training, 93 apartment buildings were occupied by the armed forces and 85 percent of Miami Beach's

hotel rooms — one fourth of Florida's total hotel space — were leased to the armed services, according to the Herald's Flashback Miami Series.

While thousands of women enlisted in the armed services, many more took factory jobs. Sparked by the iconic Rosie the Riveter, with her sleeves rolled up, her muscles flexed and her proclamation, "We Can Do It," millions of American women flooded the workforce.

During the war years, 19 million American women worked, 5 million for the first time in their lives, according to the National World War II Museum.

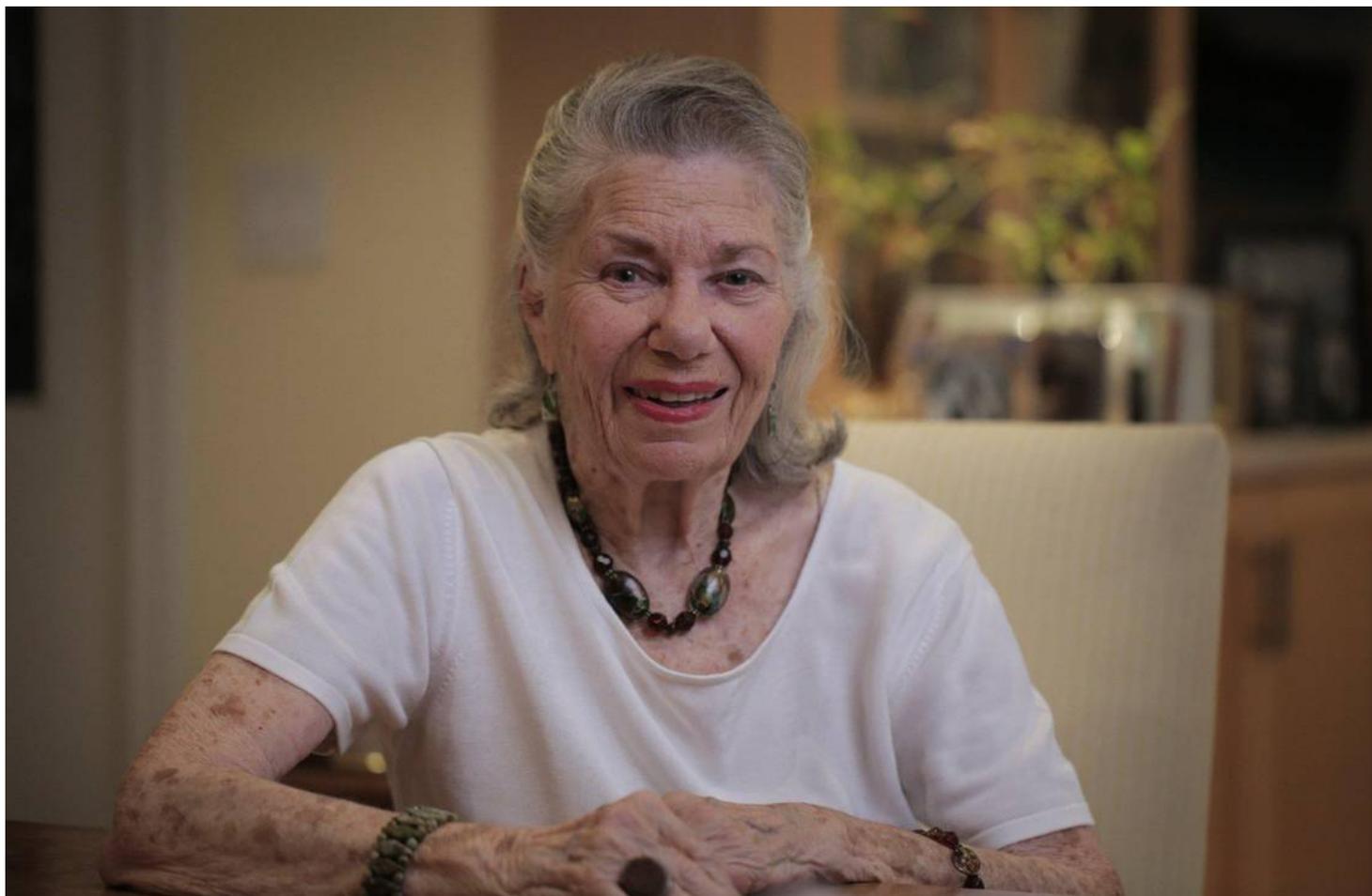
"The women took on new responsibilities and really kept things going," George said.

Thursday's program will take a closer look at the contributions of South Florida women, including how they helped to rescue European Jews after the Holocaust.

Here's a look at two women who remembered how their mothers and other women made a big difference during the war years.

REMEMBERING THE SOLDIERS ON THE BEACH

As a child growing up in Miami Beach, Ann Bussel, now 86, remembers how quickly life changed.



Ann Bussel in her home in Bay Harbor Islands Feb. 4, 2020. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

Food and gas were rationed. The Beach — and South Florida as a whole — became a training ground for thousands of American soldiers. A citywide blackout kicked in at 7 p.m.

Bussel's mother, Ruth Broad, who was 30 in 1941, had been managing her husband's law firm, Broad and Cassel, but the mother of two assumed more responsibilities during wartime.

Bussel's father, Shepard Broad, founder of Bay Harbor Islands, joined the Coast Guard Reserves and spent weekends training while building his law practice during the week.

Bussel, who was born Dec. 24, 1933, wasn't even 8 when the United States entered the war on Dec. 8, 1941, the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. She remembers soldiers marching from the hotels on the beach (which were turned into barracks) to what was called Bayshore Golf Course (now Miami Beach Golf Course) for training.

"They'd pass by my house every day, early in the morning with drums and horns," she said.

Sitting in her Bay Harbor Islands apartment, Bussel smiled as she described her mother being "ahead of the times."

Ruth Broad graduated from Syracuse University in 1931 with a French degree. She met Shepard when he and his uncle stopped in her family's country store in upstate New York. She was working at the store during a summer college break.



Ann B. Bussel's mother, Ruth Broad, in a photo taken during the war years. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

"He fell in love with her that day," Bussel said.

They married in March 1932 and had two children, Ann and the late Morris Broad.

During the war years, Ann remembers her mom inviting soldiers to Shabbat dinner and going to temple services with them. She also remembers going with her brother to the shows put on by the USO.

At the end of the war, Shepard Broad was one of 17 American men invited to a secret New York meeting with David Ben-Gurion, who would become the first prime minister of Israel, to lay the groundwork for establishing Israel.

They crafted a plan to get Holocaust survivors and the decimated European Jewish community to Palestine, as part of creating the first Jewish state. Broad got hold of two ships, retrofitted them and

docked them on the Miami River. The ships' manifest had them going to South America to pick up bananas. In reality, they picked up Jewish refugees in Europe and ferried them to Palestine.



In this undated photo, Ann Bussel (left) with her mother, Ruth Broad, President Harry Truman and her father, Shepard Broad. Jose A. Iglesias
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Also on the agenda: Shipping arms to the nascent Israel, which was against U.S. law.

Her mother knew her father could get in trouble, but that didn't deter her support of him, Bussel said.

Shepard would go on to become the mayor of Bay Harbor Islands, which incorporated in 1947. Broad, who also formed American Savings and Loan and was behind the building of the Broad Causeway, helmed American Savings for 26 years.

Ruth became known as the first lady of Bay Harbor Islands.

Today, Bussel lives across the street from a school that bears her name, Ruth K. Broad Bay Harbor K-8 Center.

Ann Bussel's father Shepard Broad founded Bay Harbor Islands and was part of the underground group behind the creation of the state of Israel. BY JOSÉ A. IGLESIAS

A SEARING CHILDHOOD MEMORY

It was more than 80 years ago, but Judy Gilbert Gould still remembers the day her father took her to the Coast Guard station in Miami Beach and they saw the St. Louis ship offshore. The ship was fleeing Nazi Germany in 1939 with more than 900 Jews seeking refuge in Cuba and Miami.

America turned away the ship, which returned to Europe. More than 250 Jews trapped on the ship died at the hands of the Germans.

"I was on his shoulders. I was 5 years old, and I remember him saying there are Jews on that ship and they can't come to our shores," she recalled. "That has stuck with me all these years."



Miami, Florida - February 5, 2020 - Judy Gilbert Gould poses in her home in South Miami-Dade County. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

After that, Gould doesn't remember her parents talking much about the war.

Gould was born on Dec. 2, 1934, in Miami. Her brother Kenneth was 17 months older than she was. They lived in the Shenandoah section of Miami and went to Shenandoah Elementary, Shenandoah Junior High and Miami High.

Her father, Stanley C. Myers, a graduate of Fordham law school, met their mother Martha Scheinberg at Beth David Congregation in Miami. They were married in 1925.

In 1938, Myers founded the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. He saw the need for the federation after *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, in 1938. Considered the start of the Holocaust, *Kristallnacht* was when the Nazis destroyed Jewish businesses and synagogues in Germany and parts of Austria.

Myers realized there needed to be one general fundraising body to support social services both locally and abroad.

During the war, Myers joined the Coast Guard Reserves. Gould's mother, Martha Myers, volunteered extensively.

"I remember vividly her dressed in her [American] Red Cross uniform with her hat and Red Cross pin, going to Miami Beach to the USO centers to serve refreshments to soldiers and roll bandages for those who were hurt," she said.



Judy Gilbert Gould's mother, Martha Myers, in her Red Cross uniform. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

Gould recalled many of the Beach hotels being turned into hospitals for soldiers. During the war years, Gould said her mother would pile them into the car and they would drive their father to work in downtown Miami because of gas rationing.

News was hard to come by those days, and she remembers going to the Tower Theater on Southwest Eighth Street to watch the news reels once a week.

She was at a theater in Miami Beach when she learned the war was over. Her family had been staying at a nearby hotel, the Blackstone, for the weekend.

"The lights went on and theater people had come out on the stage and announced the war was over," she said. "Everybody cheered and clapped."



Judy Gilbert Gould's mother Martha Scheinberg as a young woman. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

Martha remained involved in the National Council of Jewish Women, which became the official resettling organization after the war.

She said women "took on more independent roles" after the war. "They got a taste of what it was like," she said.

Gould went on to work for the federation for 25 years. Officials named the federation's headquarters after Stanley Myers in 1992.

"It was an amazing journey," she said. "Every day I walked into a building that bore his name, knowing that he founded the Greater Miami Jewish Federation. How proud he would have been had he been alive today."

IF YOU GO

What: How Did American Women Act? Heroism on the Home Front

When: 7 p.m. Thursday

Where: Miami Dade College, Wolfson Campus, Chapman Conference Center, 254 NE Fourth St.

Cost: Free

Contact: Reservations are required at ushmm.org/events/women-miami. For more information, please contact the Museum's Southeast Regional Office at 561-995-6773 or southeast@ushmm.org.



Judy Gilbert Gould's mother Martha Scheinberg (right) on her wedding day with Stanley Myers. JOSE A. IGLESIAS
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Carli Teproff grew up in Northeast Miami-Dade and graduated from Florida International University in 2003. She became a full-time reporter for the Miami Herald in 2005 and now covers breaking news.