

Profiles

Special Places

Ideas & Issues

Future Files

Updates

Remembering Our Vets

Coming exhibit at JCC will highlight Jews' military stories.

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Staff Writer

Each of Sylvia Granader's eight grandchildren has a framed portrait of her from 1942, climbing into the plane she flew during Air Force flight training at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas.

Granader, now 81 and living in Beverly Hills, Mich., was one of the lucky 1,074 Women Airforce Service Pilots (out of 25,000 applicants) who earned their wings to become the first women active military pilots in U.S. history. And — as far as she knows — she was the only Jewish "WASP" among them.

"They nicknamed me 'Schwartzzy' after my maiden name," she said. "It was just a wonderful group."

Granader spent her year as a WASP stationed in Wilmington, Del. Earning \$250 a month and with six ladies to a barrack, they spent their days practicing flight maneuvers and airplane mechanics.

She resigned when the Air Force wanted to transfer her to Waco, Texas, to tow targets from her plane that military trainees would shoot at with live ammunition.

"That didn't sit good with me," she said. Two of her friends already had been shot down by mistake.

Now, Granader's memorabilia will be part of "We Were There: Michigan Jewish War Veterans," a permanent exhibit scheduled to open at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield on Memorial Day 2003.

Curator of the show is Heidi Christein, director of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives. It is housed at the Bloomfield Township-based Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit.

"The idea is to show Michigan Jewish military personnel from the Civil War — the first war that happened after Michigan became a state — to Desert Storm," Christein said.

"The exhibit will try to be an educational exhibit by selecting a few stories of different people who served in different wars and different units," she said.

Included will be several photos of men who fought in the 1898 Spanish-American War, including one of a man astride a horse with then Lt. Col. Teddy Roosevelt on

Cuba's San Juan Hill.

The veterans of World War II will comprise the biggest section, because 10,000 Jews from Michigan served and about 225 were killed in action.

Christein said people have generously contributed memorabilia for the exhibit, which will include photographs, artifacts, uniforms and medals.

Funding From UJF

Created by Detroit designer James Conway, the 40-foot exhibit will be placed in the hallway past the Michigan Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in the JCC Kahn Building, and have rotating exhibits about other veterans as well as an interactive kiosk.

The United Jewish Foundation, the Federation's financial-banking arm, provided a \$100,000 grant-loan for the exhibit.

"Federation is raising capital to repay the Foundation for the grant," said Robert Slatkin, chairman of the JWV memorial project. "We hope to repay them. We think we will, but they're not going to pull the funding if we don't."

Some consider the exhibit a compromise. Originally, the veterans wanted to sell their JWV Memorial Home in Southfield and move their hundreds of photographs of Michigan veterans who died to a room inside the JCC.

"I would have preferred more of a memorial than an exhibit, but when they're putting up the money, you gotta do what you gotta do," said Robert Feldman, JWV Memorial Home president.

Slatkin said the present memorial room in Southfield is "really more for [the veterans] than the public." Proceeds from the JWV home's sale will help the group find another location for a memorial room and an office, "and they will continue to function until the last man," he said.

With the planned exhibit, "we're going beyond their generation," Slatkin said. "We're trying to have every generation be aware that Jewish men fought and went off to war."

With sale of the building now pending, Feldman said the group hopes to place its photographs at the Jewish Community Center in Oak Park or in a synagogue.

He said Federation may not have stepped up "until they were pressured, but they did step up and put their money where their mouth was, with the help of Robert Slatkin." □



Air Force pilot Sylvia (Schwartz) Granader and her plane, 1942.

Photo courtesy of Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives

Remember When . . .

From the Jewish News pages for this week 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60 years ago.

1992

Shomer Yisrael (Guardians of Israel) is formed as a new project by student volunteers to help Russian and Ethiopian Jews find work in Israel.

More than 1,300 guests and 650 students attend the 78th annual dinner in support of Yeshiva Beth Yehudah at Detroit's Renaissance Center.

1982

The Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit is now offering women's self-defense classes.

Perfection Lodge honors Detroit Louis Blumberg on his 60th year as a mason at a dinner held at Ferndale Masonic Temple.

1972

The musical *Milk and Honey* is staged at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre at the JCC in Detroit.

A traveling photograph exhibit called "Holocaust and Resistance" opens at the Herzl Auditorium Gallery in New York City.

1962

Ground-breaking ceremonies are held for Hebrew Memorial Chapel, being built by Hebrew Benevolent Society on Greenfield Road, south of 11 Mile Road, in Oak Park.

Knesset member Abba Eban is the guest of honor at an Israel Bonds dinner held at Cobo Hall in Detroit.

1952

The American Jewish Committee charges the Soviet Union with enslaving thousands of Jews in labor and internment camps during World War II.

1942

For the first time, all of Detroit's rabbis assemble at one gathering at Congregation Shaarey Zedek. The occasion is to honor Dr. A.M. Hershman for his 35 years of service to the synagogue.

— *Compiled by Holly Teasdale, archivist, the Leo M. Franklin Archives, Temple Beth El*