

## GERALDINE SCHNEEBERG ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

**Interviewee:** Geraldine “Gerry” Schneeberg

**Interviewers:** Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart; Jane Century (friend)

**Archival Processor:** Anna Garow

**Copyeditor:** Cameron Vanderscoff

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**Interview Contributor:** Upper West Side Seniors

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### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Geraldine Schneeberg was born in 1927 and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was a manufacturer and her mother served as a community activist who sold war bonds. Gerry was the oldest of three children and a teenager on the home front during World War II. Her only family member directly involved in the conflict was a second cousin, who was a Marine killed the day he landed on Iwo Jima. After the war, Gerry attended college in Tennessee, Florida, and Pennsylvania. She went on to pursue a career that spanned publishing, teaching, and librarianship. Gerry met her husband in 1946 and they were married two years later.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Geraldine discusses her childhood and family life in Philadelphia. She goes on to share her experiences during World War II, including her parents’ work and her feelings of insulation from the war until her cousin was killed in action. She also describes experiencing V-E Day in Times Square, her time working in the Junior Red Cross in Atlantic City, and how the conflict shaped her opinions of public service and the war in general.

#### *Keywords*

*Iwo Jima, teenager, Jewish American, war bonds, gold stars, Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Junior Red Cross, Holocaust, Times Square*

### INDEX

00:00 – Introduction

00:35 – Childhood and family

01:27 – First hearing about World War II

- 02:15 – Family’s reactions to Pearl Harbor
- 03:08 – Second cousin who was killed on Iwo Jima
- 04:35 – Father not able to serve in the war due to lingering lung infection from childhood  
tuberculous; mother was outgoing and sold war bonds
- 06:00 – Effects of gas rationing
- 07:13 – Talking about the war in school
- 07:48 – Could not go on vacation to Atlantic City because a German U-boat had been sighted off  
the Coastline; went to Rockydale Lodge in the countryside instead during the summer of  
1943/4
- 09:53 – My father’s factory; making Gold Star banners during the war
- 12:35 – Supply problems for the factory
- 14:20 – Hearing about the end of the war
- 16:12 – Not being aware of racial tension; being vaguely aware of the Holocaust
- 18:58 – Being in the Junior Red Cross
- 20:52 – The Miss America Pageant
- 22:00 – Working in the Junior Red Cross in Atlantic City
- 22:30 – Going to college after the war
- 24:21 – Meeting her husband
- 25:03 – Impact of World War II on her life
- 25:59 – Mother raising money for Israel
- 26:46 – Feelings about war and public service
- 28:14 – Closing remarks

## **STORY TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Story 1: Wartime Summer Vacation**

**[07:48 – 09:26]**

A funny incident [occurred] because we couldn’t go to Atlantic City [for vacation]. Another reason we didn’t go [there], besides the gas [rationing], was that a German submarine had been sighted off-shore at Atlantic City. My mother and a good friend of hers, who used to also go with her family to Atlantic City—and they would sometimes share a summer home together—decided that was too dangerous; we could not go there.

So, they found a place in the country, close by—Rockydale Lodge, I think, was the name of it. And it was a collection of little cabins that people, families, rented. And we went there; my father took us there and the first day we visited was in the spring. It was very muddy, rainy—it had [recently] rained. The car had to go through this muddy road, and we got there, and my mother and her friend thought, “This’ll work out.”

My father didn’t like the looks of it. He said, “Okay, ladies and the kids, have a nice summer. [*laughter*] I’ll see you when it’s time for you to come back home.” He later commented, he said, “They were safe there. The Germans wouldn’t go down that muddy road.”

## **Story 2: Manufacturing Gold Star Banners** **[11:35 – 12:33]**

Towards the end of the war, or during it, they made a square-shaped banner that you hung. It had a gold star on it and that was hung in the window when someone in the family had been killed.

KG: *So he [your father] made those and sold them to the people who had somebody—? I thought it was even somebody who served in the Army. It’s somebody who was killed?*

Well, the gold star—I’m not sure about that.

KG: *Okay. But yes, we’ve heard about that. So, he sold them and the people would put it in their windows—or where?*

Yes, you’d hang it in the window. Now, that was not felt [fabric], I remember; that was sort of a sateen. It had a white background and the star was gold, and it had fringe on the bottom.

KG: *So did he make anything else for the war, or was that [it]?*

I think that was the only item.

## **Story 3: Experiencing V-E Day in Times Square** **[14:23 – 15:37]**

I remember [hearing about the end of World War II] vividly. I had gone to New York with a girlfriend. I don’t know [why]—we were going to the theater, I guess, because we were [there]. Was it Times Square where all the theaters are?

It was an announcement and it flashed across the screen from one of the theaters, that the war had just—that Germany had surrendered. And everybody went berserk! There were some soldiers and sailors there, and everybody was kissing and hugging one another.

KG: *And you were right there in Times Square when that happened?*

Yes.

HG: *You were there for that moment: the famous kiss. You were right in Times Square?*

Yes, it was so exciting. Yeah, that I remember.

KG: *What were you and your girlfriend doing?*

Oh, we were hugging and kissing these soldiers too. [*laughs*]

KG: *Yes? [laughter] Why not? But you know, it must have been so—what a feeling that must have been.*

But you know, it was so unexpected. We had just gone there to go to the theater.

## **PHOTO CAPTIONS**

### **Current 1**

Photograph of Geraldine Schneeberg being interviewed in her home in Philadelphia (Photo Credit: Jane Century)

### **Current 2**

From left to right: Herb Goodheart, Geraldine Schneeberg, and Karen Goodheart together in Philadelphia (Photo Credit: Jane Century)

### **Artifact 1**

Portrait of Geraldine Schneeberg as a young woman (Courtesy of Geraldine Schneeberg)

## GERALDINE SCHNEEBERG ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

**Interviewee:** Geraldine “Gerry” Schneeberg  
**Interviewers:** Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart  
**Archival Processor:** Annie Javitt  
**Copyeditor:** Erica Fugger  
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### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Geraldine Schneeberg was born in 1927 and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was a manufacturer and her mother served as a community activist who sold war bonds. Gerry was the oldest of three children and a teenager on the home front during World War II. Her only family member directly involved in the conflict was a second cousin, who was a Marine killed the day he landed on Iwo Jima. After the war, Gerry attended college in Tennessee, Florida, and Pennsylvania. She went on to pursue a career that spanned publishing, teaching, and librarianship. Gerry met her husband in 1946 and they were married two years later.

#### *Summary*

In this short follow up session, Geraldine recalls how during the war, she and a friend worked as hostesses on weekends at the Stage Door Canteen, in the basement of the Academy of Music. She speaks about how they were encouraged to dance and socialize with the soldiers and sailors who were stationed in Philadelphia, and how some of the girls arranged to meet up with the servicemembers outside of the canteen.

#### *Keywords*

*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, teenager, work, canteen, Academy of Music, Stage Door Canteen, dancing, soldiers, sailors*

### INDEX

00:00 – Introduction  
00:21 – Working at the Stage Door Canteen  
01:14 – Encouraged to socialize and dance with all soldiers

01:40 – Rules of the job

01:55 – Some girls broke the rules

02:30 – Working every weekend

02:41 – No thoughts of marriage

03:03 – Conclusion

## **STORY TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Story 1: The Stage Door Canteen**

**[00:18 – 02:25]**

During the years of 1943 to 1945, when I was in my junior and senior years at high school in West Philadelphia, I would go on weekend nights with my good friend, Jane Zion, to the Stage Door Canteen. The canteen was in the basement of the Academy of Music on Broad Street. And we were there as hostesses, we were called, to serve food and to dance with soldiers and sailors who were stationed in the Philadelphia area. The woman in charge encouraged us to socialize with everyone, whether they were enlisted men or officers, and regardless of their color or background.

And so, we served food and we danced. We particularly like the dancing part. And we had been told when we had first came and were trained, that under no circumstances could we leave the canteen *with* one of these servicemen. But we learned from some of the girls, afterwards, that there were those who had made an arrangement with someone they had danced with, to meet them *outside* the canteen. But Jane and I never did that. We goody two-shoes kind of girls. And we did as we were told. We had a lot of fun.