

# *Powerful Women in History*



Presented by PAVE

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# Sarah Eldon



One of the most impactful women in my life was my long-time babysitter, Gloria Caballero. She is one of the strongest, compassionate, loving and resilient people I've ever met. Gloria immigrated to the United States from Columbia with her husband and two daughters, and started a home daycare from scratch. No matter who you were, she welcomed you into her home with open arms and always took care of people. She has always had such a loving, empathetic nature and truly believes her life's purpose was to give and do for others. Gloria has experienced significant loss and hardship in her life, but she never wavers from her purpose. She always works hard and has deep faith that things will work out. She visits Columbia every year to do community service and is an integral part of her local church. Gloria is the best role model I could have ever asked for.

# *The Great Golda Shlam*

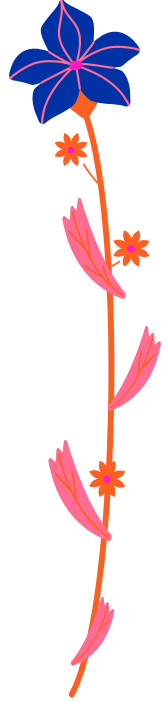
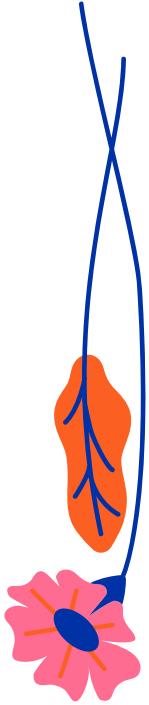
## *By Jessica Lerman*



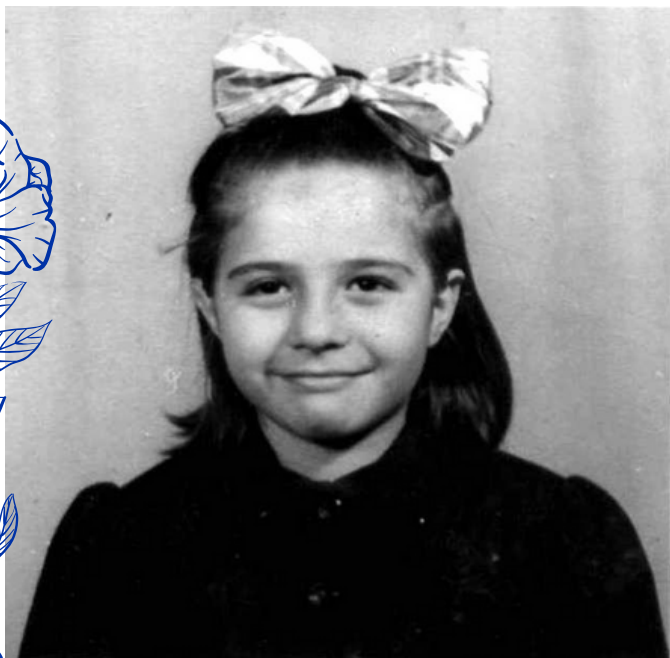
It all started in Poland in the year of 1941, Golda Shlam was born. At the age of five, she moved with her family to Germany.

Who would have known that in three years her life would change for the better? In July of 1949 her family finally got to the United States after hearing about other family members that have come over. She was eight years old at the time. My grandma told me that they also landed at Ellis Island. She confessed that her biggest struggle was not speaking the language. All she knew was Yiddish. That did not stop her.

Even though she was held back for a year she used her resilience and also having a great teacher that pushed her to learn the language she was able to do it. She was able to speak in English pretty well the end of the year. I even learned from her that at the time there was three reading groups in school. She went from the last reading group which meant you didn't do that well to being in the best one. It is amazing, I know.



With that being said my grandma is also a very smart lady. She did so much math back in Germany so therefor she was able to go into fourth grade halfway through the third grade. She was able to do this with the help of the adults around her to write a note to her teachers since she needed help to formulate the words for the letter. Besides that, every day after school she made sure to go to take care of her younger sister while her parents were busy across the street working.



Now if we jump forward a couple years you will see that my grandma worked part time at an insurance company for a year. By this time, she was married to my late grandpa Alan and were living in a two family home with her parents. She decided to stay home to take care of my dad and aunt when they were born. She wouldn't go back to work for ten years which was when my aunt Donna was in Kindergarten. Since it has been a while since she last worked, she had to learn how to file and use a computer in order to do her job effectively. Overall, I am so thankful for all she has done to get where she is today. I feel lucky that she is still around and always willing to share her story. I love her immensely and I am glad that I am able to call her my grandma.

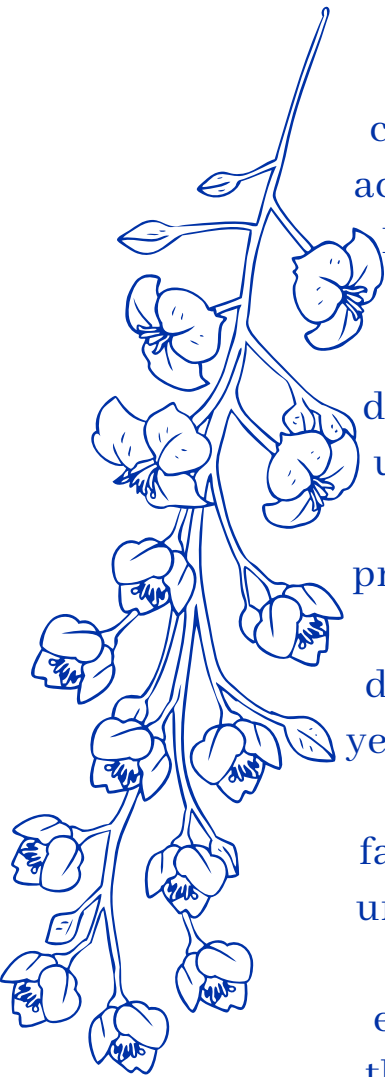
# Danielle Chiaraluce



During Women's History Month, I would like to recognize my grandmother, Angeline. Her parents, my great grandparents, immigrated to the United States from Italy.

When my grandmother was a young woman, she worked in the steel mill in Pennsylvania. These jobs were traditionally left open only to men, but when the men left to fight in World War II, women were called in to become defense workers in factories. During the war, at least five million women worked in the nation's mills and factories. My grandmother worked in the mills in the production area of the steel plant. She helped to make pipes and other war materials. At this time, my grandmother made no more than 56 cents an hour. She proudly did this job after living through the Great Depression where she and her family went through very hard times and so she was very proud to be able to contribute her wages to the family as they tried hard to rebound from this economic crisis. She said that the mill's working conditions were fairly dangerous, as the steel was very hot and could cause injury. It was full of loud noises, dirt/dust, and extreme temperatures. Each day she faced unfavorable working conditions that she had to overcome - including the fact that the mill did not even have a designated women's restroom! You may have heard that the women who worked in the mills on war materials were called "Rosie the Riveter" after a painting by Norman Rockwell (featured below). After the war, the men returned and my grandmother had to leave this job. But she found others, including clerical positions or performing in a band on a weekly radio show.





Eventually my grandmother started a family and they moved to Connecticut. She made the courageous move to interview and accept a position at Yale New Haven Hospital (YNNH) in their records department. She did so while balancing the needs of a family during a time when it was typically unheard of for women to be much more than a homemaker. She progressed at YNNH, and eventually became a supervisor in this department until she retired many years later. During this time, she was the primary breadwinner of the family because my grandfather was unable to work at a fairly young age due to medical reasons. I am extremely proud of the work ethic that my grandmother had and that she instilled in me. I admire her for working outside of traditional roles for women and breaking through these barriers by becoming successful at her job and in achieving financial independence.

# *The Night Witches*

*By Seth Light*

It wasn't that long ago in the United States, and many other nations of the world, that women were treated both by society and by the law as inferior to men. Until 2013, our military had a policy of 'no women in units tasked with direct combat'. Other countries, however, were much quicker to make this change. In fact, in 1941, a Major in the Soviet military by the name of Marina Raskova personally petitioned Joseph Stalin to allow her to form female combat units, and was granted the authority to deploy three women's air-force units. One of these three was the 588th Night Bomber Regiment, also known as the Night Witches.



The Night Witches were tasked with harassment and precision bombing against the Germans from June of 1942 to the end of World War 1. As one might expect, they weren't exactly welcomed with open arms by the rest of the military, and were given hand-me-down uniforms, inferior tools, and obsolete planes. The Polikarpov U-2, which they flew in, were outdated by over a decade, slow, and made out of wood and canvas. However, the Regiment was able to turn this disadvantage into their strength.

Though the planes were slow, they were highly maneuverable and could turn quickly. On top of that, the plane's maximum speed was lower than the stalling speeds of the Germans' fighter planes, meaning the Germans couldn't just fly up behind them and gun them down.

So, why the nickname 'Night Witches'? Well, the nickname comes from a unique tactic they employed in their bombing runs. They flew at night, and as they approached their targets, they would idle the engines of their planes and silently glide down to the bomb-release point before turning their engines back on, dropping their bombs and flying away before the enemies could react. The only sound they produced during this time was from the wind, which the Germans likened to the sound of witches flying on broomsticks. They were incredibly successful, and of the 261 people to serve in the Night Witches, 23 received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest honor given to those who performed heroic feats for the state.



# *The Amazing Grace of Rebecca Pagan by Joe Granito*

Rebecca Pagan is a Cuban born naturalized citizen of the United States.

In the 1960s, Rebecca fled Cuba with her mother and younger brother to escape the brutality that was being unleashed upon the Cuban people by Fidel Castro. She resided with extended family in Spain for two years before coming to America. When Rebecca was

11 years old, she attended PS 211 in Brooklyn and could not speak a word of English. Family strife and emotional trauma were no strangers to Rebecca.

However, she survived and thrived, graduating from high school with honors and going on to graduate from NYU, earning a degree in education.

In the late 1980's Rebecca married and had two children. Her husband Luis was Hispanic and an industrious entrepreneur with a vision. They started a security business with an armored car and a dream. Little by little they grew the business into a successful small enterprise, serving banking customers in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Tragedy struck in 1990 when Luis was killed in an armored car robbery in the South Bronx.

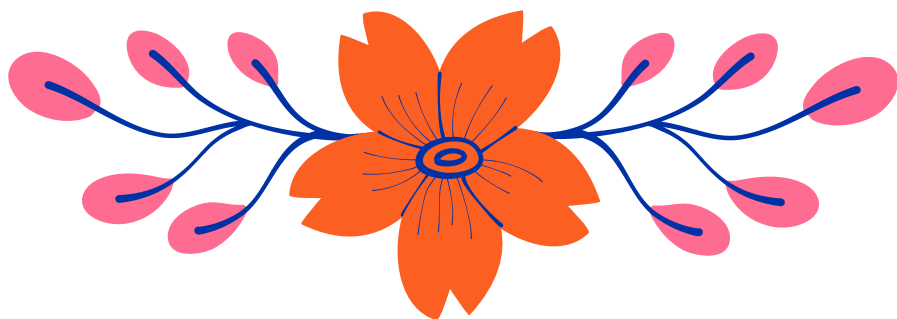


Her children Monica and Daniella were just three and five. Life could not have been tougher for Rebecca. But, she kept the business going and rallied her spirit. Rebecca grew that business to occupy 3 locations and employ 150 people. She moved her family to the Whitestone section of Queens, sold the business and invested in real estate, putting her two grown daughters through college during this process.

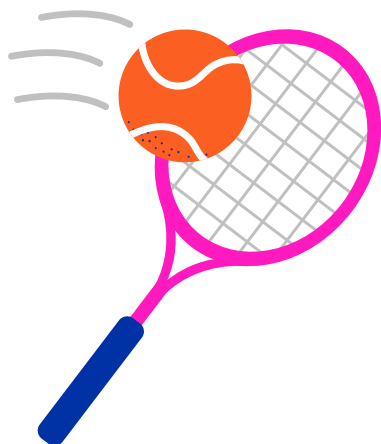
After Rebecca sold the business, she resumed her teaching career at a Long Island school and taught ESL classes at NYU to Hispanic doctors and medical students.

Rebecca is a remarkable force of nature and she can do anything, including renovating the attic of her beautiful home all by herself. She also built a shed in her back yard that is big enough to live in. Sadly, her brother died from an epileptic seizure several years ago, but she has remained steadfast in her resolve to find happiness. That happiness was found in a loving relationship and marriage to a man from Trinidad.

Rebecca has an inner spirit and drive that is to be admired and cherished. She is indeed a fantastic testimony to the character of women and is a role model for all to admire.



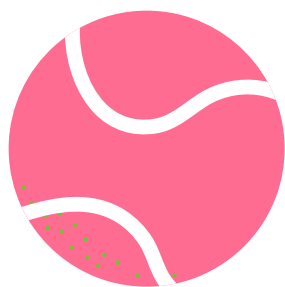
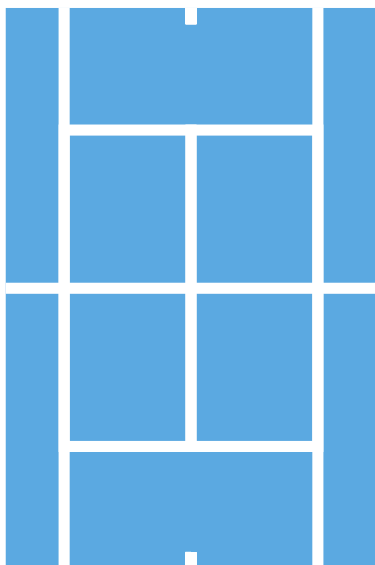
# *Alix Hunter: My Aunt Carol*



In her youth my aunt Carol was a tennis player. My dad tells me stories of driving around the country to watch her tournaments. In college, Carol played on the men's tennis team because at the time there were only men's sports. She went on to play in the US Open. After her own successful career as a player, Carol started coaching at the Heights Casino in Brooklyn, NY where she met my uncle, another squash coach. Along with my uncle, Carol passed on her skills to a new generation of squash players. She coached number one players and created a dynamic program at the Heights Casino. After she left, they honored her by naming a tournament after her. This tournament still goes on today.



The landmark Title IX of the Education Amendment was signed into law by Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972, 2 years after Carol graduated from college. This amendment required federally funded educational institutions to not discriminate against students and staff on the basis of sex. Title IX gets remembered for requiring athletic departments to provide fair and equal teams. The number of scholarships for men had to equal the scholarships for women. I went to school after Title IX when gender parity in school was taken for granted. Title IX went beyond athletics and created the legal basis for holding schools accountable for sexual harassment on campus. In the 2010s, student organizers used the protections in Title IX to fight gendered discrimination on campus, namely the poor handling of sexual violence investigations that created a hostile environment. Title IX endures over time by addressing the current gender inequality of the moment. While Title IX started to create gender equality in sports, discussion in recent years has turned to gender equality for students with minority gender identities.



# *Sue Snowden: My Swedish Momor*



My Swedish momor (grandmother) Mildred Johanssen Anderson, was a vibrant, fun loving woman who loved travelling to many countries of the world and was an adventurer for life. These experiences were not things that I knew firsthand from a personal connection to her but rather communicated to me by my siblings as I never had the chance to meet her in person. As I learned more about her interesting life through conversations and stories it all becomes so vivid.



Dancing in the kitchen with family, picnics in the country and coordinating the family business were just some of the ways she shared her love and lived life to the fullest.

Mildred was born in 1907, married young and started a family after moving to a rural country setting in Woodbury Connecticut where she actively pursued her life of starting and then running a small bed and breakfast out of her home. She set about creating an extension of her family treating young soldiers that came through the town to a warm home cooked meal and a safe harbor from life. Her enthusiasm was contagious and she was known in town for being an important coordinator of her family business keeping the books and working at her big desk in the family den that was filled with books and important invoices. She was tireless in her ambition to preserve a balanced life in the country with her husband and children while being connected to expressing her love for music and social life of the city. Her grandchildren treasured the time spent with her in the family home, cooking and eating together feeling her love as she listened to music from the Stork Club in New York City, which she was known to frequent with her friend Irene when the opportunity was presented.

This fullness of life...how I wish I had known her...but the stories that my family is passing on will always be treasured and perhaps bring me to a better understanding of myself and my life pursuits.



# *Discussion Questions:*

We hope you enjoyed hearing about the formative women in our lives. Here are questions to think about the role of women in society.

How do we stand on the shoulders of giants?

How do our female ancestors help us today?

Who in your life has redefined the role of women in society?

Who are your female role models? Why?

What can you learn from writing about women in your life?

Why is it important to remember women in history?

# *Thoughts From the Authors:*

"After writing about her, I feel more connected to my grandmother." Jess

"Starting to write is always the hard part. Night Witches ' unique strategy of turning their obsolete planes into an asset hooked me on their story. After I found my place to start the story flowed from there." Seth

"I was excited to write this story. It connected the personal experience to the historical legacy of women."  
Sue

"By revisting my aunt's story I was able to see her in the larger historical context." Alix

