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OBITUARIES

Fannie Greco, 102, dies; mother of 7 sons who served in WW II

EAST PROVIDENCE – Fannie Greco, 102, whose seven sons served in the armed forces during World War II, died Wednesday at Hattie Ide Chaffee Nursing Home, 200 Wampanoag Trail.



She was the wife of the late Nicholas Greco. Born in London, a daughter of the late Joel and Anna (Schneider) Freedman, she had lived in Warwick for 28 years before moving to East Providence in 1988. She was the last of 11 children.

At one point during the war, with her sons serving in the military, Mrs. Greco became the only Seven-Star Mother in the United States.

"I was queen for a day," she recalled during an interview with a reporter from the Providence Journal on her 100th birthday. "I was the only woman with seven flags in the window."

When her fifth son, William, enlisted, Mrs. Greco took over his job at a defense contractor, Patton MacGuyver Co., Providence, where she made parts for warplanes on the 3-to-11-p.m. shift.

Afterward, she said, she would go home and write letters to her boys. All seven sons returned home alive.

She developed a two-pack-a-day cigarette habit, she said in the interview, because she was "a nervous wreck" after her husband died of a heart attack in 1943 at the height of the war and left her with nine children.

As a centenarian, however, Mrs. Greco usually smoked only one cigarette a day — a Marlboro — when her son Ralph would visit her at the nursing home.

Memories of bringing up seven boys and two girls spilled out in November 1998, when 80 members of Mrs. Greco's family celebrated her 100th birthday at a party at Chelo's in Warwick.

One son, Ralph, recalled how his mother would rise every day at 4 a.m. and "make 40 sandwiches every morning for our lunches."

She also washed and ironed all her children's clothes nightly. "I stayed up all night scrubbing, but it didn't hurt," she said. "In fact, I used to sing and scrub at the same time. My favorite was 'My Man.' "

She leaves five sons, Ralph and Harold Greco, both of Warwick, Joseph Greco in Florida, Earl Greco of East Greenwich and William Greco of San Diego, and 23 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren and 6 great-great-grandchildren. She was the mother of the late Henry, Benjamin, Hilda and Celia Greco.

The funeral will be held tomorrow at 10 a.m. in Sugarman-Sinai Memorial Chapel, 458 Hope St., Providence. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.

GRECO, Fannie (Freedman)

September 19, 2001. Residence Wampanoag Trail, East Providence. Beloved wife of the late Nicholas Greco. Devoted mother of Ralph and Harold Greco of Warwick, Joseph Greco of Florida, Earl Greco of East Greenwich and William Greco of San Diego and the late Henry, Benjamin, Hilda and Celia. Adored grandmother of 23, great grandmother of 26, great great grandmother of 6. Funeral Service Sunday at 10:00am at SUGARMAN-SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL, 458 Hope St., Providence, RI. In lieu of flowers contributions may made to your favorite charity.