Mrs. Gussie Nelson Dies; Honored for Bond Sales

OBITUARY

NELSON, GUSSIE

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Mrs. Gussie (Zura) Nelson, the gray-haired little woman who sold more than half a million dollars worth of war savings bonds during World War II, died today.

She was the first Rhode Islander to receive the Treasury Department's medal for such services. Typically, Mrs. Nelson received the medal and the personal thanks of then Treasury Secretary John W. Snyder in the kitchen of her modest home.

Mrs. Nelson had a short explanation for her devotion to America. "Roger Williams ran away from Massachusetts to Rhode Island to get his freedom," she said. "I came from Russia to Rhode Island to find freedom."

Mrs. Nelson, 63, had resided at 99 Hillside Ave. recently. At the time of her war activity she lived at 200 Orms St.

The widow of Abraham Nelson died at Miriam Hospital after a short illness. She leaves two sisters, Mrs. Mary Goodman of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Mrs. Harry Penn of Providence.

Mrs. Nelson was born in Russia on April 1, 1895, a daughter of the late Morris and Shima Zura. She had been a resident of Providence for the past half century.

She was sent out of Petrograd by her parents when a 10 year-old child because of the troublesome times. After a stay with friends in Denmark, she came to this country.

Mrs. Nelson always recalled sadly how she saw her mother slump to the railroad platform in a faint as her train pulled out of the station. She never was to see her mother again.

"I have enjoyed the opportunity to be free and to think freely in this country," Mrs. Nelson said when asked about her charitable and patriotic work. "I cherish my freedom with all my heart. I'm only paying this country back for what it has offered me."

Her husband had interrupted rabbinical studies to flee Russia. He was working as a polisher in a Providence jewelry factory when Mrs. Nelson met him. They set up a shop at 29 North Davis St. and began selling clothing and upholstery materials. Later they operated a similar business on Orms Street.

Mrs. Nelson developed into an outstanding salesman for worthy causes over the years. Her first efforts were with the Women's Field Army Against Cancer.

She was a life member of the Jewish Home for the Aged, a former president of the Ladies Union League for Consumptives of Providence, and a member of the board of governors of the Jewish Tuberculosis Sanitorium. She was cited for her work in Israel Bond drives.

Mrs. Nelson was a member of the Miriam Hospital Association, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Providence chapter of the National Women's Committee for Brandeis University.

Everywhere there were funds to be raised, for hospitals, cancer and polio drives, she was in the forefront. Mrs. Nelson said that most of the strangers she approached as a solicitor later became her friends.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m. tomorrow at the Max Sugarman Funeral Home, 458 Hope St. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery, Warwick.