



A treasured elder...

Filomena Rita Trautwein

Enjoying a long and meaningful life in Gainesville

Treasure
Our
Elders

Filomena Trautwein effortlessly springs from her chair and stands to greet the Treasure Our Elders interviewer when he enters her cozy room at Palm Garden of Gainesville, her home for the past four years. At age 91, Trautwein is sharp as a razor and in remarkably good physical condition, save for “a bad back from picking up men,” she jokes. It’s also literally true — Trautwein worked for years in New York and New Jersey veterans’ hospitals and cared for thousands of injured sailors and Marines.

Jersey girl

Filomena Rita Cemino was born the oldest of five children on September 16, 1915 in North Plainfield, New Jersey. Her father was a supervisor at Spicer Auto, which supplied the Ford Motor Company with auto and truck drive trains. He had just received a promotion and was in the process of relocating the family to Detroit when he unexpectedly died of undiagnosed throat cancer at age 42. Her mother — suddenly a widow at age 38 and in the midst of the Great Depression — raised all five children alone and never remarried. She supported the family as a caregiver and nursemaid and relied on her wits and determination to keep the family together. “My mother was a real fighter.”

Trautwein’s own plans to study art on a scholarship had to be set aside in favor of attending nursing school at nearby St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. “I had to help support the family and nursing sure paid better than art,” she shrugged. Graduating as an RN at age 23, she went to work at the hospital and later, at Muhlenberg Hospital in Plainfield.

War years

Like so many of her era, Trautwein vividly recalls exactly where she was when news came of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. “Three of us girls from the hospital were in a car with three boys on our way to a dance when the news came on the radio,” Trautwein recounts as if it were yesterday. “We looked at each other and we all resolved to enlist.”



No-Nonsense Nurse:

A photo of 28-year-old Filomena Cemino taken upon her commissioning in the U.S. Navy. At right, a page from the national Weekly Reader in 1943, showing her caring for a wounded sailor at St. Alban’s Naval Hospital in Jamaica, New York. Below, Mr. & Mrs. Charles J. Trautwein on their wedding day, January 16, 1944.



Two days later, Trautwein was with her friends in Manhattan near Pier 92 taking a battery of Navy physical and psychological fitness tests. “My mother was all for me enlisting because it spared my only brother from having to serve.” In those days, the sole surviving son of a widow was practically draft-exempt. Trautwein was later inducted, commissioned an ensign and on her way to California for training. Soon she was deployed back to the New York-New Jersey area, stationed at St. Alban’s Naval Hospital in Jamaica, New York and at the Staten Island Navy Station.

Reaching down from her chair and touching her lower legs, Trautwein matter-of-factly describes how she routinely would dress blast and burn leg wounds and apply sterile maggots for debriding necrotic tissue. “We had thousands of these patients but no antibiotics in those days, so many of the boys lost limbs to infections easily treated today.”

Meeting, marrying Charles

Trautwein’s naval career came to a mandatory end in 1944 with her marriage to Charles Trautwein, a high school history teacher whose father had been a successful Chrysler dealer in Woodbridge, New Jersey. Their one-year courtship was conducted mostly by mail and it was in a letter that Charles proposed (“He wrote, ‘I think it’s time we get married.’ That’s the way he was.”). Soon after the marriage, Charles left the teaching profession in order to help with his father’s nascent Trautwein and Sons Company (later, TASC), a manufacturer of custom-built and outfitted fire trucks. The company prospered and remained in business from 1933 until 1985. The couple raised two children and were married 46 years until Charles’ death in 1990, on the day of his grandson’s christening.

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Once a nurse, always a nurse

Trautwein relocated to Florida when her daughter, an architect, moved there in 2000. She remains a very active presence at Palm Garden of Gainesville as evidenced by the numerous volunteer recognition awards that cover the bulletin board next to her bed. She boasts of having taught the dietary manager how to make real Italian lasagna and of her almost-never use of the nurse call button. "I'm supposed to be a patient," she protests. "Heck, I can't be a patient — I'm a nurse."

FHCA honors Filomena Rita Trautwein and treasures her many contributions to our state and nation.

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Pleasantly surprised

"I recently was a patient at your facility. I was very happy with your services and wanted to comment on my stay. I was pleasantly surprised at the quality of your food service, which was certainly above average for institutional food... While I hope to not need your services again, I certainly would return to Palm Garden if the need arose. I would also be quick to recommend your facility to others."

—**W.J. Jungers**, Ocala, to Administrator **Jennifer Mikula** and the staff at **Palm Garden of Ocala**

None compare

"My mother, Crystal Malott, was a resident at your facility from January 24th through April 5th. We reside in Ohio during the summer months, and my mother has been in rehabilitation and nursing facilities there, however none compare to Sunset Point... My mother was given exercises that she was able to do, which also encouraged her to try harder. Mom used to say, "I can't," but now at least she can... The food was prepared excellently, nourishing and appealing to the eye... Again, my family and I want to express our gratitude and thanks to the staff at Sunset Point. I wish all facilities of this type could be as nice and run as well as yours."

—Daughters **Bonnie True** and **Phyllis Freier** and the family of Crystal Malott to **Vicky Henderson**, Director of Rehabilitation, **Sunset Point Rehabilitation & Nursing Center**, Clearwater

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Mark Keene

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Northwest Florida

Karl Moore

678-360-0567

Karl.Moore@KPS-Rx.com

Southwest Florida

Arlan Larson

727-415-5164

Arlan.Larson@KPS-Rx.com

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