

★ American Gold Star Mothers, Inc

Beginnings

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, George Vaughn Seibold, 23, volunteered, requesting assignment in aviation. He was sent to Canada where he learned to fly British planes since the United States had neither an air force nor planes. Deployed to England, he was assigned to the British Royal Flying Corps, 148th Aero Squadron. With his squadron, he left for combat duty in France. He corresponded with his family regularly. His mother, Grace Darling Seibold, began to do community service by visiting returning servicemen in the hospitals.

The mail from George stopped. Since all aviators were under British control and authority, the United States could not help the Seibold family with any information about their son.

Grace continued to visit hospitalized veterans in the Washington area, clinging to the hope that her son might have been injured and returned to the United States without any identification. While working through her sorrow, she helped ease the pain of the many servicemen who returned so war-damaged that they were incapable of ever reaching normalcy.

But on October 11, 1918, George's wife in Chicago received a box marked "Effects of deceased Officer 1st Lt. George Vaughn Seibold". The Seibolds also received a confirmation of George's death on November 4th through a family member in Paris.

On Sunday, December 15, 1918, nine days before Christmas Eve, the following obituary appeared in the Washington Star newspaper:

*Lieut. G. V. Seibold Killed in Action
Battling Aviator, Recently Cited for Bravery in
France, is War Victim.*



Grace Darling Seibold

Lieut. George Vaughn Seibold, battling aviator, cited for bravery in action some time ago, lost his life in a fight in the air August 26, last. His father, George G. Seibold...has been officially notified of his son's death by the War Department.

Lieut. Seibold was a member of the 148th U. S. Aero Squadron. He was first reported missing in action, though a number of circumstances led to the fear that he had been killed. Hope was sustained until now, however, by the failure to receive definite word.

George's body was never identified.

Grace, realizing that self-contained grief is self-destructive, devoted her time and efforts to not only working in the hospital but extending the hand of friendship to other mothers whose sons had lost their lives in military service.

She organized a group consisting solely of these special mothers, with the purpose of not only comforting each other, but giving loving care to hospitalized veterans confined in government hospitals far from home.

The organization was named after the Gold Star that families hung in their windows in honor of the deceased veteran.

After years of planning, June 4, 1928, twenty-five mothers met in Washington, DC to establish the national organization, American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.

The success of our organization continues because of the bond of mutual love, sympathy, and support of the many loyal, capable, and patriotic mothers who while sharing their grief and their pride, have channeled their time, efforts and gifts to lessening the pain of others.

We stand tall and proud by honoring our children, assisting our veterans, supporting our nation, and healing with each other.

On May 28, 1918, President Wilson approved a suggestion made by the Women's Committee of the Council of National Defenses that, instead of wearing conventional mourning for relatives who have died in the service of their country, American women should wear a black band on the left arm with a gilt star on the band for each member of the family who has given his life for the nation.



Woodrow Wilson

"The Service Flag displayed from homes, places of

business, churches, schools, etc., to indicate the number of members of the family or organizations who are serving in the Armed Forces or who have died from such service. Service flags have a deep Blue Star for each living member in the service and a Gold Star for each member who has died." Thus, the Gold Star and the term Gold Star Mother, as applied to mothers whose sons or daughters died in World War I, were accepted; they have continued to be used in reference to all American military engagements since that time.

Who Is a Gold Star Mother?

Often the question has been asked, "Who is a Gold Star Mother?" During the early days of World War I, a Blue Star was used to represent each person, man or woman in the Military Service of the United States. As the war progressed and men were killed in combat, others wounded and died of their wounds or disease, there came about the accepted usage of the Gold Star.

This Gold Star was substituted and superimposed upon the blue Star in such a manner as to entirely cover it. The idea of the Gold Star was that the honor and glory accorded the person for his supreme sacrifice in offering for his country, the last full measure of devotion and pride of the family in this sacrifice, rather than the sense of personal loss which would be represented by the mourning symbols.

On June 4, 1928, a group of twenty-five mothers residing in Washington, DC, met to make plans to organize a national organization to be known as American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., a nondenominational, non-profitable and nonpolitical organization. On January 5, 1929, the organization was incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia.

The Charter was kept open for ninety days. At the end of this time they had a membership of sixty-five, which included mothers throughout the United States: North, South, East and West.

There were many small groups of Gold Star Mothers functioning under local and state charters. When these groups learned of a national organization with representation in nearly every State in the Union they wished to affiliate with the larger group and many did so. This group was composed of women who had lost a son or daughter in World War I.

Beyond World War I

During the 1942 National Convention of the AGSM, the membership was opened to mothers who had lost a son or daughter in World War II and was again opened after the Korean Conflict.

The Charter

American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. is registered in the United States Patent Office, Legislative Branch of the United States Congressional Library and the United States World Book Almanac.

The original copy of the Federal Charter granted to the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. was placed in the Archives of Congress.

One June 12th, 1984 the Ninety-Eighth Congress of the United States granted the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. a charter. Sec. 3 lists the objects and purposes for which the corporation is organized, shall be those provided in its articles of incorporation, and shall include a continuing commitment, on a national basis.

- Keep alive and develop the spirit that promoted world services.
- Maintain the ties of fellowship born of that service, and to assist and further all patriotic work.
- Inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, State, and Nation.
- Assist veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, and other strategic areas and their dependents in the presentation of claims to the Veterans' Administration, and to aid in any way in their power the men and women who served and died or were wounded or incapacitated during hostilities.
- Perpetuate the memory of those whose lives were sacrificed in our wars.
- Maintain true allegiance to the United States of America.
- Inculcate lessons of patriotism and love of country in the communities in which we live.
- Inspire respect for the Stars and Stripes in the youth of America.

- Extend needful assistance to all Gold Star Mothers and, when possible, to their descendants.
- To promote peace and good will for the United States and all other Nations.

Membership

We are an organization of mothers whose sons or daughters served and died that this world might be a better place in which to live.

Natural Mothers, who are citizens of the United States of America or of the Territorial and Insular Possessions of the United States of America, whose sons and daughters served and died in line of duty in the Armed Forces of the United States of America or its Allies, or died as a result of injuries sustained in such service, are eligible for membership in American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. Adoptive Mothers and Stepmothers who reared the child from the age of five years whose natural mother is deceased, are also eligible under the above conditions.

The minimum membership of a new Chapter shall be five eligible members. Departments are composed of Chapters within their respective States or such other Chapters as the National Executive Board shall approve.

There are no honorary members. Husbands of a member and siblings of the deceased may be enrolled as an Associate Member, paying no dues, holding no office nor having a vote. There is no form or class of membership except as active membership and dues are paid annually. Members-at-large forward their yearly membership per capita to the Department Treasurer of their state.

Convention

A National Convention is held annually at a time and place decided by a preceding convention; or, in the event such time and place is not voted by the National Convention, then it shall be decided by the National Executive board. The purpose of the National Convention is to elect officers for the ensuing year and to transact any and all business as may properly come before it.

Affiliations

American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. is a member of the Advisory Board of the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service. Almost all Chapters of American Gold Star Mothers throughout the United States of America give many hours of volunteer work and personal service in all Hospitals for Veterans and to the veterans and their families in their community. The organization works closely with all Veterans' Organizations.

Proclamation by the President of the United States

Whereas the preamble to Public Resolution 123, 74th Congress, approved June 23, 1936 (40 Stat. 1895), recites:

Whereas the service rendered the United States by the American mother is the greatest source of the Country's strength and inspiration; and "Whereas we honor ourselves and the mothers of America when we revere and give emphasis to the home as the fountainhead of the State; and

"Whereas the American mother is doing so much for the home and for the moral and spiritual uplift of the people of the United States and hence so much for good government and humanity; and

"Whereas the American Gold Star Mothers suffered the supreme sacrifice of motherhood in the loss of their sons and daughters in World Wars"

and Whereas the said Public Resolution 12 provides:

"That the President of the United States is hereby authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the Government officials to display the United States flag on all Government buildings, and the people of the United States to display the flag and to hold appropriate meetings in their homes, churches, or other suitable places, on the last Sunday in September, as public expression of the love, sorrow and reverence of the people of the United States for the American Gold Star Mothers."

"Sec. 2. That the last Sunday in September shall hereafter be designated and known as "Gold Star Mother's Day," and it shall be the duty of the President to request its observance as provided for in this resolution."