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Tampa Chartered First Blood Bank

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Early in 1941, the Medical Division of the Office of Civilian Defense in Washington asked that communities all over the country set up regional blood and plasma banks in anticipation of World War II. To that time, most organized blood donor activities had centered around the needs of specific patients or at specific hospitals. America was getting ready for unifying many activities in World War II. Blood was only one of them.

There were only five Congressional Districts in Florida in 1941 and citizens’ groups in
each one talked about organizing community, not-for-profit blood banks. It took Pearl Harbor to convince everyone of the need. The first blood bank chartered in Florida, and one of the first in the country was the Southwest Florida Blood Bank in Tampa on March 10, 1942.

The driving force for all of that was Mrs. Frank D. Jackson. Grace as she is remembered by her contemporaries, was a person for getting things done. She asked people for money and she went door-to-door asking for blood donations. In so many ways, Grace Jackson typified American women during World War II. There is an image of "Rosie the Riveter" but the ability to organize was the strong point of many American women.
It was most appropriate then that Grace Jackson was featured in the radio series narrated by Esther Simon Brown for the Tampa Electric Company called "Women at War." The following is script number 16 in Series 4, dated Thursday, November 12, 1942. It is presented only as edited by a military censor who marked statements like "The several air fields, our great ship building area make of Tampa a military objective" as "Not Approved, CEB, Navy." "Sabotage in our great war industries here" was changed to "Accidents in our great war efforts here" and an injured sailor who "speaks only Russian" became a seaman, a poor blue-eyed boy who "does not speak English."

WOMEN AT WAR!

THEME: Establish ... fade.

ANNOUNCER: THE TAMPA ELECTRIC COMPANY presents ... WOMEN AT WAR!

THEME: up full ... fade ... hold under.

ANNOUNCER: In recognition of the vital and patriotic role that you, as an American Homemaker, are taking in our nation's war effort ... the TAMPA ELECTRIC COMPANY brings you ... WOMEN AT WAR!

THEME: up and down.

ANNOUNCER: Women are at war! ... Women everywhere are taking part in those activities so necessary to VICTORY! ... With husbands and sons on the fighting front, they concentrate every effort to strengthen the home front .... not only to maintain the health and morale of their own homes,...but to contribute to those war duties, without which there can be no VICTORY! ... It is to these women ... to all women at war ... we dedicate this program.

MUSIC: Establish ... hold under

NARRATOR: America is at war - a war with fiendish dictators, who stop at no cruelty to deprive all others of the right to live! The colossal waste of human life, brought about by man's inhumanity to man, has greatly increased the necessity of having available supplies of human blood plasma and serum, so that we can live!

ANNOUNCER: Women at war stand by, willing to share their life-blood to save the lives of those who are losing it in battle. Women know that war of today brings death and devastation not only to our fighting men, but it attacks the cradle in the home as well.

NARRATOR: Women at war know that the health and well-being of Homefolk is a powerful weapon with which we can defeat our enemies; that war against suffering and disease is tremendously important. It is everybody's business and it calls for all-out offensive action. What can we do about it? Listen! Here is one thing you can do about it ... something that WOMEN AT WAR are already doing ... Here is the story of the Southwest Florida Blood Bank, and we are proud to present its chairman, Mrs. Frank Jackson.

Jackson: Much has been done since April 19th of this year, when our Blood Bank in Tampa received its first patriotic pint of blood. It is our aim to render full service to every call in our community as a Civilian Defense Activity, and at this time, we are extending the service to the entire First Congressional District. Civilians must be informed on points such as these:
1st voice: A blood bank is a place where human blood either whole or in the form of plasma is stored ready for instant use.

2nd voice: Plasma is that portion of human blood which remains after the red and white corpuscles have been removed and after processing, no typing or cross matching is necessary.

JACKSON: With modern equipment, the care and safe storage of prepared blood, make arm-to-arm transfusions unnecessary.

MUSIC BREAK

ANNOUNCER: After the Pearl Harbor Attack, three out of every four of the victims required transfusions. Without blood-plasma a large number of these unfortunate people would have died, but of those who reached Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu, 96 out of every hundred were saved. Listen to this:

MUSIC: up and down ... hold under.

NARRATOR: Immediately after the transfusions were given, this wounded American pilot began to look like a living person instead of a corpse. In hardly more than ten minutes, he opened his eyes.

ANNOUNCER: (in character) Where am I?

1st voice: (nurse) You’re in the hospital, and you’re doing fine.

ANNOUNCER: (in character) Have I had a transfusion?

1st voice: (nurse) You’ve had two of them.

ANNOUNCER: (in character) Gee, - that’s funny, nurse. I’ve given blood to the Blood Bank twice. I didn’t dream that they were gonna have to give it back to me, - at least not this soon.

MUSIC: Up full...down.

NARRATOR: Plasma for peacetime needs of industrial Tampa has never been adequate and war has greatly increased the need.

JACKSON: Accidents in our great war efforts here, could too easily bring injury and shock in such numbers that blood transfusions calling for typing the blood would prove an impossible task. Plasma in the hands of medical men, aside from war disaster, means life more abundant for any community.

MUSIC: Up full ... down ... hold under entire scene.

NARRATOR: From the date of the formal opening of the Tampa Blood Bank to the beginning of the active operation of the Southwest Florida Blood Bank, no day has gone by that has not provided its high point of interest. -Listen:
MUSIC

2nd voice: One day a call came for plasma. Eight wounded seamen had been brought in from a torpedoed ship.

JACKSON: I was in the hospital at the time. I accompanied the surgeon in visiting these wounded men. - Doctor, what’s wrong with this boy?

ANNOUNCER: (as doctor) His neck is broken.

JACKSON: Can he live?

ANNOUNCER: (as doctor) Chances are good for him. As soon as he gets this plasma transfusion to overcome the shock, we’ll go right to work on him.

JACKSON: This poor blue-eyed boy, doctor! His legs look like the binding on my bible.

ANNOUNCER: (as doctor) Yes, that same bible, that says: "love thy neighbor as thyself." -Someone certainly didn’t love this poor little foreign lad.

2nd voice: (as nurse) Mrs. Jackson, the boy does not speak English and he is terrified. I believe he thinks that both of his legs have to be amputated.

JACKSON: What do you think, doctor?

ANNOUNCER: (as doctor) I can’t tell until after another plasma transfusion. It will take time, but I believe we can save his legs.

MUSIC: Up and down,…hold under...

NARRATOR: A hurried call was made to MacDill Field for someone who could speak with the young sailor, someone who could console him in his misery, in his own language. Within thirty minutes three boys came to the hospital to relieve the anxiety of this bewildered and suffering victim.

JACKSON: After four months of expert attention, and skin grafting in our Tampa Municipal Hospital, the lad is back on his ship to Alaska.

MUSIC: up and down.

ANNOUNCER: The Southwest Florida Blood Bank is operated for two reasons:

1st voice: To provide and store plasma for civilian or other emergency use.

2nd voice: To war against suffering and disease in home territory.

JACKSON: Both of these aims are tremendously important with the realization that countless hundreds of lives have and will be saved by blood transfusions.

ANNOUNCER: In seven months time our Southwest Florida Blood Bank is set up complete, with equipment second to none.

1st voice: This was possible by securing a priority rating through our ship building company, placing our Blood Bank next to the Army and Navy in securing necessary equipment.

NARRATOR: The Blood Bank is located at Municipal Hospital in the west wing of the ground-floor. Mrs. J. Brown Farrior is the receptionist.

JACKSON: Our staff of highly trained technicians include Mrs. Howard McQueen, Miss Elinor Stryker and Mrs. Norma Paclaz, sterilization expert. Important to the safe and
efficient operation of the Blood Bank is our Medical Committee, appointed and approved by ... the Medical Head of the Defense Council, Dr. John Boling. Dr. Herbert Mills, nationally recognized Pathologist, supervises Laboratory. Dr. Norvell Dean renders invaluable service through our outlying Donor Centers.

NARRATOR: Dr. Dean with Mrs. Jackson and the two technicians visit each of the Donor Centers in the Southwest district every two to four weeks, Donor Centers at:

1st voice: Bartow, Lakeland, Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, St. Petersburg, Sebring, Lake Wales and Sarasota just started.

2nd voice: Donor Centers at St. Petersburg, Lake Wales, Sebring, Bradenton and New Port Richey.

NARRATOR: Two-thirds of the Blood Donors in one district as well as over the entire United States, are women!

MUSIC BREAK

ANNOUNCER: WOMEN AT WAR!

NARRATOR: In these uncertain times, it is the patriotic privilege and duty of all health adults to become donors. -One morning at the Blood Bank Center a woman came to offer her blood.

MUSIC: Establish and hold under.

1st voice: (as woman) My husband was at Corregidor he is listed as missing soon after General Wainwright took command. This is my daughter-

NARRATOR: How do you do?

1st voice: Today is my husband's birthday, and both my daughter and I feel, that giving our blood for suffering humanity is the nicest gift we could offer to his memory.

MUSIC: up full ... down ... under.

NARRATOR: Three seamen, rescued as the only survivors from a burning vessel, were in Tampa, enroute to a destination unknown. They came to the Blood Bank Center. As one sailor approached the receptionist, he said:

ANNOUNCER: (in character) (laughingly). Some months ago, I read my name among the missing in Shanghai, -but here I am. Before I leave Tampa, I'd like to give some blood to the Blood Bank. You see, I wouldn't be here, if it was not for a transfusion of that plasma stuff when I needed it. -I'm well, and itching to get back to take another crack at those Japs.

MUSIC: up full ... down and under.

NARRATOR: A world war veteran offers his blood to the Blood Bank.

ANNOUNCER: (in character) It was the Argonne Forest. I was just ahead of my group, when suddenly:

SOUND: Shells bursting,... reduce slowly .... Music up.

ANNOUNCER: (continues) It blew me about twenty feet. I crawled back into the enormous hole it had torn in the ground. -I was crouching there when...

SOUND: Shells bursting,... fade out,... Music up.

ANNOUNCER: (continues) I was blinded, but for a moment my vision cleared, -then all was black again. I saw the whole devasting scene from that one moment of
vision. -From then on all was total darkness. -I can’t do much now, but I can give my blood, and if the doctor says its okay, you can expect me every two months. I’ll be here to try to save some poor devil from the suffering I experienced.

MUSIC: Up full and down.

NARRATOR: Each day more and more women are answering the call of the Blood Bank. Calls like these:

MUSIC

1st voice: The feeble cry of a newborn baby who must have your whole blood.

2nd voice: The accident victim in essential war work must have plasma without delay.

JACKSON: From off torpedoed ships, the wounded - except for plasma - may not survive the shock.

NARRATOR: Your blood as a gift, is unlike money, unlike time or work, -it is a gift most literally from your heart, straight to the heart of another, -to an American soldier or sailor, who may live to help save all you count precious in this world, because you took one simple, generous step to help save him. It is also a gift to your neighbor, should he in time of disaster be less fortunate than you.

1st voice: The process of giving blood is painless and brief. In 15 minutes the procedure is completed, -the donor rests a short time, -is given a refreshment and then goes on about his or her normal business.

2nd voice: Red Cross shows a record of the first 10,000 donors. In no instance has harm come to a single donor.

JACKSON: Words of praise and commendation for the donor, who gives his or her blood are but feeble, ineffectual expressions of gratitude as compared to the actual life giving power of that gift to suffering humans, -Women at War, -the Blood Bank, located at Municipal Hospital, needs your contribution now! Call them by phone for an appointment.

MUSIC

ANNOUNCER: WOMEN AT WAR!

NARRATOR: Blood Donors, like all Americans today, Florida’s earliest inhabitants lived and some of the artifacts must be healthy, -and health demands food, -the right food, -selected according to nutritional standards and prepared in such way, as to preserve life-giving minerals and vitamins.

ANNOUNCER: Leisure House at TAMPA ELECTRIC is your Nutrition Headquarters. Its staff of trained home economists are ready to help you with your family feeding and nutrition problems, -ready to show you how to convert your peace-time leisure to war-time duty.

NARRATOR: With Women at War - Leisure goes to work for Victory!

MUSIC BREAK: 669B.

NARRATOR: We are happy to have had as our guests this morning Mrs. Frank Jackson, President of the Southwest Florida Blood Bank, Mrs._______, Mrs.________ and Sgt__________.

ANNOUNCER: You are cordially invited to use the facilities of Leisure House. It is your Nutrition Headquarters, Enroll for the Nutrition Classes, which are held each Wednesday afternoon from 2 until 4, and each Friday morning from 10 to 12. Call
Leisure House by phone at any time for help on any homemaking questions.

NARRATOR: This is Esther Simon Brown for The Tampa Electric Company, reminding you to include War Savings Stamps on your weekly shopping list. It’s a sure way to be thrifty.

The script featured Mrs. Frank Jackson, but Grace featured the Southwest Florida Blood Bank and its blood donors. That organization is still operating under the same name today. The wisdom of the founders called for an activity that was to serve not only the war effort but also the future needs of these communities on the West Coast of Florida. The satellites that Grace Jackson described as set up from Sebring to Sarasota to Tarpon Springs are now independent.

The spirit of the "Women at War" lives in the same slogan used today by the Southwest Florida Blood Bank more than a million blood donations later: Give the Gift of Life.