

# SPARs Collection

*Semper Paratus, Always Ready*

By Ben Salata, Curator of Collections

## One of the wonderful collections

that the Historical Society has received in the last decade came from Lori Widmer Rose when she donated her mother's US Coast Guard SPARs materials from World War II. Azalee T. "Miami" Widmer (1922-2008) served as a transportation specialist for the Coast Guard after training in Palm Beach when the Biltmore Hotel was an enlisted training facility.

Only a fraction of the amazing collection of photographs, documents, and uniforms is featured here. Gifts such as this one allow the Historical Society to tell the story of WWII in Palm Beach County. It is also possible to follow triumphs and tragedies of Widmer's life through her keepsakes: how she met her husband (Boatswains Mate William M. Widmer) in the Coast Guard in Portland, Oregon, as well as the loss of her brother, Corporal Edwin (Eddie) Beard when his plane went down over the Atlantic Ocean.

The uniform (upper right) was very fashionable for the time. Created by French-born designer Mainbocher of New York City, it was incorporated into the recruitment drive just as the slogan "train under the Florida sun" was added to the Coast Guard's propaganda arsenal. The jacket is part of the dress blue wool uniform worn by both SPARs and the Navy's WAVES. The drivers permit (form D-117; middle right) was the required identification for transportation specialists. In the photo (lower right), "Miami" Widmer is driving a 1940 Ford Deluxe Station Wagon.



Form D-117 UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
DRIVER'S PERMIT

WIDMER, Azalee T. Sp 3/c  
(Name) (Rate)

is hereby authorized to drive the following Coast Guard  
Motor Vehicles: Up to and including 3/4 ton.  
3/4 Ton to 1 1/2 Ton. Over 1 1/2 Ton.

Tested by: *Geo. M. Dickie* Approved by:  
*M. M. M. 'c* Transportation Officer

