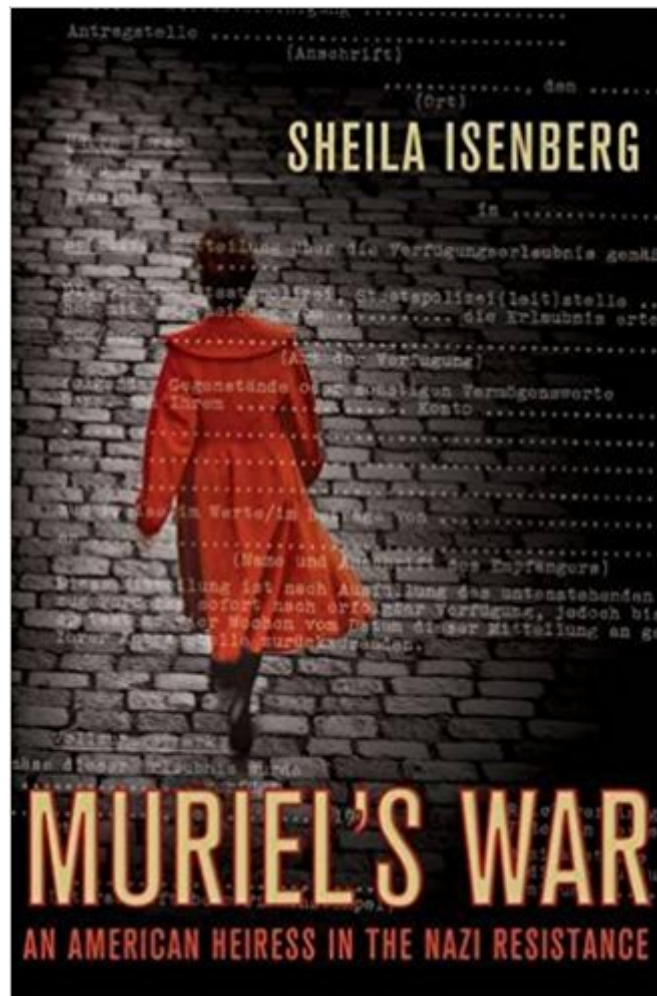


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Muriel's War: An American Heiress In The Nazi Resistance



Synopsis

An American heiress turned resistance hero, Muriel Gardiner was an electrifying woman who impressed everyone she met with her beauty, intelligence, and powerful personality. Her adventurous life led her from Chicago's high society to a Viennese medical school, from Sigmund Freud's inner circle to the Austrian underground. Over the years, she saved countless Jews and anti-fascists, providing shelter and documents ensuring their escape. This remarkable woman's life as a legend of the Austrian Resistance was captured in the movie *Julia* with Vanessa Redgrave and remains an inspiration to all those who believe that one individual can change the world. Gardiner's astonishing story is told here for the first time in all its variety and unanticipated twists and turns.

Book Information

Hardcover: 256 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Press (December 7, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0230615651

ISBN-13: 978-0230615656

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #850,343 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #80 in [Books > History >](#)

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Customer Reviews

“Terrible times can elicit extraordinary deeds even from ordinary people, and Muriel Gardner was anything but ordinary” [Author Sheila Isenberg sets] the story straight about this intrepid American heroine. • The Boston Globe “Performed an act of historic justice” • The Jerusalem Post “It is simplest to put it this way: privilege, exotic friendships, intellectual adventure, international intrigue, and danger marked the life story of American heiress Muriel Gardiner. But that doesn't cover this woman's contribution to the history of World War II, the magnetism that drew a fascinating string of lovers to her, nor her nerve in using her wealth to save countless lives from the rolling Nazi juggernaut in the 1930s and 40s. It seems like the stuff movies are made of. And in Gardiner's case, maybe it was.” • America in World War II Magazine “Muriel Gardner was a beautiful, electrifying woman who mixed with high society, was a part of Sigmund Freud's inner

circle, and eventually joined the Austrian underground, where she helped thousands of Jews and anti-Fascists escape the Nazis. Her remarkable life story continued after the war with philanthropy and preservation of Freud's memory.

• **Library Journal** "In many ways, Muriel Gardiner's existence was the embodiment of the American dream | With a keen eye for detail, Isenberg explores Gardiner's life and admirable sacrifices.

• **Kirkus Reviews** "The life of Muriel Gardiner | is truly heartwarming â€" the number of lives she saved, or at least had a hand in saving, was incredibly great. And the saga of her long, adventurous life makes thoroughly fascinating reading | Biographer Sheila Isenberg delves quite deeply into Muriel's personality, drawing on Muriel's own writings and the recollections of her wide circle of acquaintances ... the narrative tells not only a detailed story of her life, but also adds greatly to our knowledge of life in Europe as events marched inexorably toward the catastrophe of World War II.

• **San Diego Jewish World** "A long overdue biography of a remarkable woman. Mining hitherto unpublished material Sheila Isenberg skillfully weaves together the complex threads of Muriel's life into a riveting story of her many loves and unassuming heroism.

• **Brenda Webster**, author of *Vienna Triangle* "Sheila Isenberg tells Muriel Gardiner's extraordinary story exceedingly well. Muriel's War portrays the energetic idealism and exceptional generosity of its subject with admiration, even devotion. Through careful attention to every available source, Isenberg details the remarkable achievements of a life filled to overflowing with benevolent action and unflinching reflection.

• **George Rupp**, President, International Rescue Committee "Beautiful, brilliant, rich, brave, Muriel Gardiner could have been a character in a potboiler novel -- but she was a real-life heroine of the Nazi resistance and Sheila Isenberg has done an extraordinary job of documenting her remarkable life both conscientiously and suspensefully in this absorbing biography.

• **Amanda Vaill**, author of *Everybody Was So Young: Sara and Gerald Murphy* "A Lost Generation Love Story" "This is an utterly absorbing book. Exhaustively researched and thoroughly documented, it is dramatic, suspenseful, and movingly inspirational.

• **Arthur Zitrin**, M.D., Professor emeritus of psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, Co-producer of the documentary film, "The Real Julia: The Muriel Gardiner Story" "Isenberg puts Gardiner's life in sharp focus--what twists in her life brought her to Vienna and ultimately to underground resistance work during and after Hitler's 1938 takeover of Austria. We see what makes Gardiner human, and what makes her a hero, but most of all we see how one woman can make a difference in the lives of many. Muriel Gardiner looked fear in the face, and as Eleanor Roosevelt has said, 'we must do that which we think we cannot.'

• **JoAnn Myers**, chair of the Eleanor Roosevelt Center, professor of Political Science & Women's Studies at Marist College

Sheila Isenberg is the author of several books, including *A Hero of Our Own: The Story of Varian Fry*, named a Notable Book of the Year by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and featured by the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the groundbreaking *Women Who Love Men Who Kill*. Isenberg is adjunct professor of English at Marist College. She has appeared in many documentaries and on multiple media platforms, including NPR's *Morning Edition*, CNN's *Anderson Cooper*, *20/20*, *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*. She lives in New York's Hudson Valley.

Another great woman we never learned about.

Muriel Gardiner was an American heiress who helped scores of people who were in mortal danger after the German invasion of Austria because of their racial or political affiliation. Gardiner's courage and idealism became the subject of several plays by Lillian Hellman who, however, refused to acknowledge Gardiner as their heroine. Gardiner's own account of her rescue mission is brief and modest. The full story, based on unpublished records, is told in Isenberg's book.

Someone needs to do an updated movie on this story. It has all the amazing plot lines. What an incredible woman.

I liked this book because it is a true story fictionalized. As I lived through WW11, I found Muriel to be someone to really admire. I purchased several copies of this book as gifts.

My maiden name is Morris. I lived on the South Side of Chicago and attended the University of Chicago Lab School (high school). I graduated from Wellesley College in 1948. It was fated that I enjoy this book, and Muriel and I did. Bettie Morris Magee

Muriel Gardiner was born and raised in Chicago. Her parents, Edward and Helen Morris made a fortune in the meat-packing business. Upon her father's death, in 1913, Muriel inherited six million dollars (equivalent to \$67 million in 2010). With that fortune she indulged herself with luxuries like travel and enjoying a sensual and adventurous life. She attended Wellesley College where her political beliefs had begun to coalesce. Women rights, issues of justice versus injustice became her concern. At twenty-one she went to Oxford, England to study English literature. After Oxford she went to Vienna, Austria for psychoanalysis. Later on, she attended medical school at the University of Vienna, where she witnessed violent anti-Jewish sentiments; Jews were often brutally attacked

by Fascist students. Muriel was half Jewish. Her mother was a Protestant who had brought up her children as Protestants; Muriel's father was Jewish. Muriel wrote: "I suddenly felt solidarity with them, not because they were Jews but because they were oppressed." Being imbued with a keen sense for social justice and compassion, Muriel decided to get involved with the political parties in Austria that opposed the anti-Semitism and Fascism, whatever the cost would be. She used her money to help Austrian Socialists and to save as many Jews as she could. She lived in Vienna, for twelve years. As a captive in Nazi concentration camp, I had always been wondering why the United States, a nation founded and populated by the oppressed of different faiths and from many lands did not stop Hitler's genocide? Where were the good Samaritans? They were expected to have compassionate regard for all people, not just some people! Where were the fighters for human rights? How could their humanitarian reputation be maintained when our suffering became unbearable? It is refreshing to read that Muriel Gardiner, an American woman of valor had been involved with the Resistance during WWII. She literally risked her life to work against the Nazis and to save Jewish and others, lives. She appreciated her money because she had been able to use it for victims of the Nazis. After the war, Muriel rendered support to refugees who managed to get to America. She gave interest-free loans to individuals who wanted to buy their own homes. Believing that nothing was more important than supporting young people who were seeking an education, Muriel paid college tuition for countless people. She was a good soul, a humanitarian till her last breath. I had experienced and observed Nazi atrocities in Poland and in Germany. In *Muriel's War*, the author Sheila Eisenberg brings to light the virulent Anti-Semitism and Nazism that had prevailed in Austria, thus enhancing my knowledge. The book is well written and brilliantly narrated; the facts are substantiated by over one hundred pages of Notes.

'*Muriel's War*' conveys the life of Muriel Gardiner, heir to both the Swift and Morris meatpacking fortunes. The background of her family and their businesses in Chicago as well as her childhood phobias and sensitivities are well described. Her character as she matures is built, showing her growing sensitivities, "why do we have fur coats while other people are cold and wet?". Her growing awareness and curiosity in the world around her, her education and travels are all described in an interesting fashion. Her personality is investigated including her interest in psychoanalysis and resulting residency in Vienna. Her marriages, her lovers and especially her growing horror at the political situation in Austria as she began her plan to save and use her fortune for those who were in danger of the coming German Austrian Anschluss. The layers of information are all told in an interesting fashion. Her daughter Connie is not overlooked and the effect of Muriel's commitment to

her causes over the years and the effect on her daughter are covered, but the love between them and the grandchildren that came in her later years are included. Muriel's later years are included, even her despair at the conditions in Europe after WWII and the Hellman 'Julia' controversy are well written of. This is an interesting biography of a not well known woman who changed the course of history and saved thousands of lives. Those who are fascinated with women's history, WWII, and reading of those who made a difference in this world would find this book fascinating.

This author must be commended for what I consider to be one of the best researched biographies I've read. The title is intriguing & I selected the book because of it, but it very much portrays perfectly the story of Muriel Gardiner. It is not merely another retelling of WWII but a dramatic story about WWII through the eyes of one person who lived it. A story of courage, determination, conviction, self-sacrifice, & how one person with a social conscience can change the world for so many. For anyone with an interest in history & in particular WWII - leading up to, during & after, I highly recommend this biography as an incisive first hand account of those events. A remarkable story about one remarkable woman who changed lives because she cared!

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