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Individual, Institutional and Rabbinical Responses to  
Religious and Social Challenges Facing Jews in the  
United States Military During World War II

Franklin Adam DeWoskin

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for Ordination

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Cincinnati, Ohio

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Referees: Dr. Gary P. Zola  
Dr. Mark Washofsky

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my great uncle, Sam Glickman. He was a medic during World War II and was one of the soldiers who participated in the D-Day landing.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Dr. Gary Zola and Dr. Mark Washofsky who have guided me through the task of writing a thesis. I owe them both much thanks for challenging me in this endeavor.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AEF	Army Expeditionary Forces
AJA	Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
CANRA	Committee on Army and Navy Religious Affairs
JWB	Jewish Welfare Board
JWV	Jewish War Veterans
n.d.	No Date
POW	Prisoner of War
USAMHI	United States Army Military History Institute
YIVO	Yidisher Visenshaftlikher Institut - Institute for Jewish Research
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

### Interviewees

EF	Eugene Fohlen
NF	Nathan Friedman
HK	Harold Kuenstler
GL	George Lamb
LL	Leonard Lerner
HP	Herbert Paper
NS	Ned Schneider
JS	Jack Sorkin
EW	Ed Winthrop
JW	Jerome Wurmser

## DIGEST

The primary focus of this thesis is an examination of the experiences of the Jew as a participant in the United States military. The approaches used are that of researching the historical background of the Jewish involvement in the American armed forces, interpreting responsa literature that deals with this topic, and analyzing interviews with World War II veterans and other primary and secondary material.

Chapter One examines the history of Jews in the United States military. It highlights their involvement from the Revolutionary War until World War II. It demonstrates that the story of Jews in the military is illustrative of other people in the same setting.

Chapter Two examines *Halakhic* issues Jews faced in World War II. It analyzes some of the responsa that the Responsa Committee of the Jewish Welfare Board wrote. It also interprets a responsa article written by Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman in the early twentieth century, in which he attempted to reconcile the difficulties found by an observant Jew in a European military. This chapter also looks at a responsa written in the 1980's by Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik discussing Jews in the military.

Chapter Three samples the experience of Jews who served in the United States military during World War II. Through analysis of ten interviews, supported by other literature, a general description of the Jews' experience is given including how they fared in the military setting as practicing Jews and socially with people of other faiths.

In the final chapter, the author summarizes his research, concluding that the military was as good a place as any for a Jew to experience positively being both American and Jewish.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Jewish Military Personnel and their Significance

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief survey of Jewish involvement in the United States armed forces from the Revolutionary War until World War II making it analogous to a general overview of American military history.

The ideal in the American military was the role of the citizen soldier exemplified by Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. He was a wealthy patrician in the early days of the Roman Republic who achieved success in the government and then retired to be a farmer. Cincinnatus was summoned to the dictatorship and rescued his country from its enemy. After the war, he returned to his small estate to continue cultivating it. He was considered to be the first citizen-soldier, one who fights in the military for a specific war and then returns to civilian life after that war is over.<sup>1</sup>

From the earliest days of the American republic, the citizen-soldier played a significant role. Even in colonial times, citizens were conscripted into service when necessary. "The American Revolution created a 'dual army' tradition that combined a citizen-soldier reserve (the militia), which supplied large numbers of partially trained soldiers, with a small professional force that provided military expertise and staying power."<sup>2</sup> The concept of a citizen-soldier has continued throughout American history.

After the War of 1812 until the beginning of the Civil War, military professionalization took place.<sup>3</sup> This meant citizens were trained to be professional soldiers and sailors by attending the West Point military academy

established in 1802 or the Naval Academy established in 1850. The academies helped to create a professional officer corps that had not existed in the first days of the republic.

During the Civil War, both the Confederate and Northern sides utilized a draft to conscript men into service to meet the large numbers needed. This period demonstrated the continued importance of the professional soldier and citizen-soldier working together to succeed.

After the Civil War, there was a rapid demobilization<sup>4</sup> because the citizen-soldier tradition allowed for only a small number of professional troops. The military did not significantly increase again until World War I when the number of soldiers skyrocketed with the assistance of a draft. After this war, the numbers again decreased. As World War II appeared probable, an unprecedented number of people joined the military partially due to the draft.<sup>5</sup>

The Jews' participation in the United States military illustrates this history; their experience was representative of all the soldiers' experience.

As there has always been a military presence in America, so too have Jews always been a part of it. One may trace the beginnings of Jewish involvement in the military to colonial times when Jews fought in the militia.<sup>6</sup> Originally, however, they were not allowed to do so. In 1655, the town militia of New Amsterdam increased for protection against a Swedish colony and the Native Americans. Governor Peter Stuyvesant excluded Jews from standing guard, but required them to pay a special tax because of the exemption. Asser Levy and Jacob Barsimson, two Jews, petitioned for the right to stand guard or at least not have to pay the taxes forced upon them. Their petition was denied, yet Levy later

won the right to perform guard duty, thus becoming a more active member of society protecting his family and friends.<sup>7</sup>

For most of the first one hundred years of the United States existence, Jews served in the military as citizen-soldiers without any religious support or assistance. There were no Jewish institutions or organizations to help give them practice their Judaism while serving. They volunteered because of their patriotism or they were drafted and had to fight.

One of the earliest examples of a Jewish citizen-soldier was Francis Salvador<sup>8</sup> (1747-1776) who was born in London, England. The wealth and position of his family helped it to sponsor a Jewish Naturalization Act that was scuttled by Parliament in a wave of anti-Jewish hostility.<sup>9</sup> Feeling that he was a second class citizen in England, he moved to America where he was accepted as a Jew.

In 1773, Salvador settled in South Carolina because his uncle and father-in-law repaid debts that they owed him with large tracts of land there on which he carved out a sizable plantation. Salvador found immediate acceptance in Carolinian society and was invited to sit in the provincial congresses that opposed England's rule. He also served in the first General Assembly established under the provincial congresses.<sup>10</sup>

In 1776, he rode 28 miles to rouse the militia when the British with the support of their allies, the Indians and the Tories, moved to massacre settlers on the western frontier. He volunteered to serve in the militia. While on an expedition that was ambushed, he was shot and scalped.<sup>11</sup>

Salvador is thought to be the first Jew to die in battle for the United States of America. His life illustrates how a young America offered Jews opportunities

for both social and political acceptance. His death for America shows the depth of his commitment to religious freedom in this country.

Solomon Bush<sup>12</sup> (1753-1796), born in Philadelphia, was another example of a citizen-soldier. His merchant father Mathias Bush was an important leader in the Mikveh Israel synagogue who signed the non-importation agreement against Britain. Unsurprisingly, Solomon Bush, with this family background, enrolled as a captain in 1776 to "...revenge the wrongs of his injured country."<sup>13</sup> He saw action in the Battle of Long Island, the defense of Philadelphia, and the Battle of Brandywine. After this last battle, Bush broke his thigh then hid in his father's house. The British discovered him, took him prisoner, and later released him on parole.<sup>14</sup> Bush received a citation for his service during the critical and hazardous time of the winter of 1776.<sup>15</sup>

Solomon Bush fought as a citizen-soldier for the United States. After the war he applied to be Postmaster General. Although he did not receive the appointment, he still served his country to the best of his ability. While serving the United States, he also donated money toward a new synagogue building for the Mikveh Israel Congregation in Philadelphia. Despite his later drift from Judaism through intermarriage, he had fought as a continental soldier while remaining a practicing Jew.

Jacob I. Cohen<sup>16</sup> (1744-1823), a Jew from South Carolina, was another representative of a large number of soldiers who served during wartime and then returned home to their citizen life. Cohen was later a founder and leader of the Jewish community in Richmond, Virginia. He received a commendation that stated he had "in every respect conducted himself as a good soldier and a man of courage." Cohen fought in the company referred to as a "Jew Company." A



majority of the soldiers in this brigade was not Jewish, but many eligible Jews of Charleston, South Carolina joined and so it received its nickname. Cohen believed that "the Jews gave proportionately as many as their neighbors and contributed as freely as their means to the cause."<sup>17</sup>

The "Jew Company" reflected how citizen-soldiers participated in the military fighting for the young United States. Cohen and the "Jew Company" were examples of soldiers with some who were heroes while others just did their job. In this way, Jewish soldiers continued to be representative of the American soldier.

David Camden De Leon<sup>18</sup> (1813/1816-1872) followed in his father's footsteps and graduated with a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1836. When the Mexican War began in 1845, De Leon served as a doctor under General Zachary Taylor. In a battle with Mexico's Santa Anna, all of the American officers were killed or wounded. De Leon, without military training, took command to keep the U.S. troops from panicking and rioting. Turning defeat into victory, he earned the nickname, "The Fighting Doctor," and received a thank-you citation from Congress.<sup>19</sup> De Leon was another example of a patriotic Jewish soldier.

Later in the nineteenth century, the numbers of professional soldiers began to increase. A professional soldier is one who received appropriate training and stayed in the military for a period of time longer than one war. Jews, like other Americans, also became career soldiers and sailors.

Uriah Phillips Levy<sup>20</sup> (1792-1862) of Philadelphia, had a significant impact on the United States Navy despite the controversial nature of his career. He was thought to be the first professional Jewish sailor and fought against using corporal

punishment. Levy's strong personality often offended others. Even so, he did what he did because of his love of the sea and Judaism and a strong sense of patriotism.

When he was ten years old Levy served as a cabin boy without his parents' consent. At the age of twelve, he returned home to prepare for his Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Having become an adult in the Jewish community, Levy began his naval career during the War of 1812. At the same time, he remained committed to the Jewish religion by attending services and to his Jewish culture by visiting Jewish homes. He served on the *Argus* (1813), the first American warship to invade the British coast near the English Channel. While on the ship, he was promoted to acting lieutenant and assigned to board other ships and destroy them.<sup>21</sup> Levy was captured while bringing a prize ship into a neutral French port and remained there for sixteen months. He received official promotion to lieutenant in 1816.<sup>22</sup>

Levy committed himself to confront the religious prejudice he faced in the navy. While practicing his Judaism openly, he often encountered anti-Jewish attitudes. This was reflected in his six court-martials, all carried out "from actions of a petty nature."<sup>23</sup> It was Levy's quick temper and an anti-Jewish attitude by the navy brass that got him into trouble. Even so, he continued to fight for what he thought was right. He said, "What will be the future of our navy if others such as I refuse to serve because of the prejudices of a few? There will be other Hebrews, in times to come, of whom America will have need. By serving myself, I will help give them a chance to serve."<sup>24</sup>

Levy made a large impact within the military as an officer and a Jew. Not only did he respond to anti-Jewish behavior, he also treated his crew as human

beings. Levy opposed flogging as a form of punishment, devising alternative methods of discipline. He banned flogging on a ship he commanded, the *Vandalia* (1838-1839). In 1853, he published *Manual of Rules for Men-of-War*, a list of regulations that he believed should be followed entitled. In 1862, Levy wrote, *Rules and Regulations for Men-of-War*, which was used by the navy to teach newly commissioned officers about regulations in a modern navy.<sup>25</sup>

Levy continued to fight for command of a ship even though it was constantly withheld from him. He cited an anti-Jewish attitude as the reason that he did not receive additional commands.<sup>26</sup>

His actions throughout his life prove a statement he once made. "I am an American, a sailor, and a Jew."<sup>27</sup> Not only did he dedicate his life to the navy, but he was also an American patriot. He donated a statue of Thomas Jefferson to Congress and purchased the then dilapidated Monticello, Jefferson's home, and restored it.<sup>28</sup> Levy was significant in that he was a Jew fighting in the United States Navy, opposed flogging, and demanded respect for all sailors. He was not just a professional sailor: he was also a Jew proud of both his religious heritage and his American citizenship.

Two additional Jews who reflected a new tradition of a professional military family were the father and son pair, Alfred Mordecai (1804-1887) and Alfred Mordecai, Jr. (1840-1920). The Mordecai family<sup>29</sup> is thought to be the first professional military family of Jewish origin in America. The father graduated first in his class from West Point in 1823 and served as a military engineer and a noted expert in ordnance with recognized authority in scientific research and the application of mechanical science to war uses. Mordecai, Jr. followed in his footsteps. He graduated from West Point in 1861, became a military engineer and

was equally expert in ordnance. Mordecai Jr. served as an instructor at West Point and was promoted to general before retiring in 1904. The Mordecai family lived during a time when America began training and retaining a corps of professional soldiers that enabled families to make soldiering a career.

The Civil War changed America; the soldier played a more active role than before. Jewish soldiers increased due primarily to the larger number of Jews living in the United States. Over one million soldiers served in the Union's military<sup>30</sup> with approximately 7000 Jews in uniform<sup>31</sup>. In the South, almost 900,000<sup>32</sup> men fought including about 1200 Jewish soldiers. More Jews fought in the North because of increased immigration by German Jews who had settled in the North prior to the war's outbreak.

Jews fought hard on both sides. There are stories told of Jews who fought above and beyond the call to duty.<sup>33</sup> However, many Jews, like many non-Jews, fulfilled their minimal responsibility in order to try and return home alive. Others bought substitutes; they hired people to take their spots.<sup>34</sup>

The religious needs of an increased number of Jewish soldiers who fought on both sides of the conflict underscored the need for Jewish clergy in the military at this time.<sup>35</sup>

The original chaplain's bill in the House of Representatives discussing military chaplains read that they should be "regularly ordained minister[s] of some Christian denomination."<sup>36</sup> As active and accepted citizens, this law offended Jews.<sup>37</sup> After all, "the personal liberties and civil rights of members of all religious minorities had been safeguarded by a Constitution which carefully separated church from nation...."<sup>38</sup> This in turn should have allowed for chaplains of all minority faiths to participate in the military.

During the Civil war, most religious leaders in the Jewish community of the United States had not earned rabbinical diplomas, though many of them were capable leaders and knowledgeable Jews. They were referred to as reverends. Michael Allen of Philadelphia was believed to be the first unofficial Jewish chaplain. He was elected as a regimental chaplain in 1861, but due to a YMCA worker's observation, Allen had to resign his position; he was not of a Christian denomination and not a regularly ordained clergyman. His resignation made the chaplain issue a public question.<sup>39</sup>

Congress eventually changed the wording of the law from Christian denomination to religious denomination so that Jews could be chaplains. Abraham Lincoln appointed the first Jewish chaplain, Rabbi Jacob Frankel, on September 18, 1862.<sup>40</sup> Frankel (1808-1887) was born in Bavaria, trained musically and became a cantor. In 1848, this popular and gentle man was elected to the position of minister of Rodeph Shalom Congregation in Philadelphia. Upon his appointment to the chaplaincy, Frankel served military hospitals in the Philadelphia area for three years. He often sang during his rounds and invited soldiers to his congregation for services and holidays.<sup>41</sup>

The first regimental chaplain was Ferdinand Leopold Sarner (1820-1878). Born in Lissa, Posen, he received academic training at the Gymnasium in Hamburg and the Royal Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and earned a Doctorate of Philosophy at the University of Hesse. While still a student, he was elected as rabbi of the congregation of Battenfeld. When he arrived in the United States, he became a rabbi at Brith Kodesh Congregation in Rochester, New York serving for one year. In 1863, he was elected chaplain of the 54<sup>th</sup> New York

Volunteer Infantry. His unit saw action at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and in the invasion of South Carolina.<sup>42</sup>

Frankel and Sarner set the stage for other Jewish clergy to be appointed to the military.

In the Civil War, Jews fought against Jews. In both the North and the South, Jews felt connected to one side or the other because of their geographical location and a feeling of being at home. While Jews on both sides became professional soldiers, most were citizen-soldiers. Nevertheless, the Civil War was a period of continual growth of the professional soldier.

From the late 1800's, there was a mix of Jewish citizen-soldiers and professional soldiers with an increasing number of Jews choosing the professional role. Because of the existence of Jewish chaplains and an increase of Jewish soldiers organizations were created. These new institutions' purposes were to support and facilitate Jewish participation in the military.

In 1896, the Jewish War Veterans<sup>43</sup> (JWV) was founded partially to refute the general belief that Jews did not fight in the Civil War. In fact, the high number of Jewish veterans justified the creation of an organization. The JWV is the oldest active national veteran's service organization in America.<sup>44</sup> It has continued to fight for Jewish causes and the rights of Jewish soldiers and veterans.

The Young Men's Hebrew and Kindred Associations secured funds to enlist rabbis for service at military posts and called a conference of several Jewish bodies, giving birth to the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) in 1917. The JWB secured recognition as the official Jewish agency for Jewish religious and welfare work in military settings. It met the needs of large numbers of Jews who required religious services, endorsed rabbis to serve as chaplains and provided staff at

military recreation centers at home and abroad. The large number of Jews who served during World War I underlined the need for this national organization.<sup>45</sup>

More than 250,000 Jews served as American soldiers in World War I. The large number was due to several reasons. First, there was the huge Jewish immigrant boom in the late 1800's and the early 1900's. Many new citizens wanted to fight for their country and for their freedoms. Immigrants volunteered to go back and fight against the people who had harassed them. About eighteen percent of the total Jewish contingent volunteered to fight and possibly die for their country.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the draft conscripted huge numbers of men. A large number of Jews were drafted from urban America.

The Jewish chaplain played an increasingly important role in the military during World War I. Chaplain Elken C. Voorsanger (1889-1963) was the first Jewish chaplain during the war. He wrote of a positive experience among Jews in the military.<sup>47</sup> Jews celebrated Passover in France as one Jewish community without fighting between Orthodox and Reform. Not only did intra-Jewish factionalism subside and help to raise Jewish identification, but Jews also received support from both inside and outside the military. The Quartermaster's Corps, for example, helped to get enough *matzah* for the whole week of Passover.

There were other examples of the military supporting the Jewish troops. On August 23, 1918, the Adjutant General of the Army Expeditionary Forces (AEF) wrote a memo requiring that, "Wherever it will not interfere with military operations, soldiers of the Jewish faith serving in the AEF will be excused from all duty, and where deemed practicable granted passes, to enable them to observe in their customary manner the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement."<sup>48</sup>

Chaplain Voorsanger, in 1918, wrote positively of the YMCA which during the Civil War, had caused an unofficial Jewish chaplain to be dismissed. Now the YMCA helped to arrange services for soldiers of the Jewish faith and offered to pay expenses for Chaplain Voorsanger's trip. The impact of an outside organization upon Jews in the military was significant. It showed how organizations took care of soldiers regardless of faith and to further the war effort. Voorsanger wrote, "How this war is breaking down prejudice, hatred and petty narrowness is indicated by just such incidents as this -- a Christian organization promoting a Jewish religious service and offering to foot the bill! All hail to the new and liberal spirit which the YMCA (and be it said all of us) is learning over here."<sup>49</sup>

The JWB helped to build Jewish pride. "As for the Jewish soldier, the Jewish Welfare Board made him anxious and proud to be a Jew. If there were 200 Jewish men in a company, 200 attended services. They came because they wanted to."<sup>50</sup>

Jewish parents were relieved to know that as their children served, they still were able to practice their Judaism. Jacob Rader Marcus wrote a letter to his family describing his Jewish activities mixed into a military setting. He included, "...Seeing me in my uniform, with my pistol...with a talith on my shoulders kissing the Torah and davening like an orthodox boy. It's a great life folks." He concluded his letter with, "I only write this to let you know that I have not forgotten that I am still a Jew."<sup>51</sup>

Like the rest of the military population, a small number of Jews had courage, bravery and dedication that earned them acknowledgment of acts that were above and beyond the call to duty. A Jewish example of this was Sam



Dreben, an immigrant from Russia. He found a career that he liked when he enlisted in the army. He took part in military excursions in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine conflict and in the Boxer Rebellion in China. During World War I, Dreben led a platoon against a dangerous machine gun nest, capturing five guns and several prisoners.<sup>52</sup> For his hard work he earned the Distinguished Service Cross.

According to the Jewish War Veterans, fourteen Jews received the Congressional Medal of Honor during all of America's history through World War II. Jews were awarded many other military badges of honor such as the Distinguished Service Medal and Crosses and the Silver Star.<sup>53</sup> Jews fought just like the rest of the population.

Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War during World War I, wrote, "In all the branches of the War Department service and in the officer personnel and enlisted ranks of our great army, I have found members of the Jewish race doing their duty--loyal, sympathetic, devoted to their tasks, and intensely patriotic. They showed themselves to be true Americans, than which no higher praise can be given."<sup>54</sup>

This chapter has looked at the fact that Jews have been involved in the United States' military from the very beginning of the country. It tells the story of the Jew in the military as being illustrative of the rest of the military. At the beginning, Jews were primarily citizen-soldiers who fought and returned home. As Jewish military involvement increased, Jews started becoming professional soldiers while continuing to be citizen-soldiers. Also as the numbers increased, Jewish support institutions came into existence including Jewish chaplains, the JWV and the JWB. The Jews in the military continued to reflect the rest of the

military by a small percentage of them receiving awards for outstanding service to their country.

World War II was a significant event in the history of the Jews in the United States. A large number of Jews fought as American soldiers in Europe and in the Pacific. During this war, Jews faced many issues including the resolving of *Halakhic* concerns while serving in the military. What were the issues and how did they deal with them?

<sup>1</sup> Adam, Alexander. *Roman Antiquities or an Account of the Manners and Customs of the Romans*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott and Co. 1872. p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> Millet, Allan R. and Peter Maslowski. *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. New York: The Free Press. 1984. p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Millet, *For the Common Defense*. p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Millet, *For the Common Defense*. p. 233.

<sup>5</sup> "Draft, Military," in *The World Book Encyclopedia*. 5 (1982): pp. 264-65.

<sup>6</sup> For more details, see: Levinger, Rabbi Lee J. *A History of the Jews in the United States*. Cincinnati, OH: Union of American Hebrew Congregations. 1949; Peters, Madison C. *The Jews in America: A Short Story of Their Part in the Building of the Republic*. Philadelphia, PA: The John C. Winston Company. 1905; Peters, Madison C. *Justice to the Jew: The Story of What He has Done for the World*. New York: The McClure Company. 1908; Schappes, Morris U. *The Jews in the United States; A Pictorial History 1654 to the Present*. New York: The Citadel Press. 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Schappes, *The Jews in the United States*. pp. 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> For more details, see: Brody, Seymour "Sy". *Jewish Heroes and Heroines of America*. Hollywood, FL: Lifetime Books, Inc. 1996. pp. 5-6; Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States*. pp. 94, 114.

<sup>9</sup> Marcus, Jacob R. *The Jew and the American Revolution*. Cincinnati, OH: American Jewish Archives of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. 1974. p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Rezneck, Samuel. *Unrecognized Patriots: The Jews in American Revolution*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1975. pp. 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus, *The Jew and the American Revolution*. p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, see: Brody, *Jewish Heroes and Heroines of America*. pp. 11-12; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*. pp. 25-27, 171-72.

<sup>13</sup> Marcus, *The Jew and the American Revolution*. p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*. pp. 25-26.

<sup>15</sup> Brody, *Jewish Heroes and Heroines of America*. p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> For more details, see: Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*. pp. 46-48, 113, 173.

<sup>17</sup> Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*. pp. 46-47.

<sup>18</sup> For more details, see: Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States*. pp. 155, 200; Jewish War Veterans - USA, National Memorial and Museum, *An Invitation to Come and Enjoy The Jewish War Veterans National Memorial and Museum (A Pamphlet)*. Washington, DC: JWV-USA National Memorial.

<sup>19</sup> Jewish War Veterans, *An Invitation*.

<sup>20</sup> For more details, see: Fitzpatrick, Donovan and Saphire, Saul. *Navy Maverick: Uriah Phillips Levy*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1963; Kanof, Abram. *Uriah Phillips Levy: The Story of a Pugnacious Commodore*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Press of the Jewish Publication Society. 1949; National Museum of American Jewish Military History. *An American, a Sailor, and a Jew: The Life and Career of Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy, USN (1792-1862)*. Washington, DC: National Museum of American Jewish Military History. 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*. pp. 38-45.

- <sup>22</sup> Kanof, *Uriah Phillips Levy*. p. 7.
- <sup>23</sup> National Museum of American Jewish Military History. *An American, a Sailor, and a Jew*. p. 14.
- <sup>24</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*. pp. 59-60.
- <sup>25</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*, p. 149; Kanof, *Uriah Phillips Levy*, p. 41; Library of Congress Card Catalogue on line search: <http://catalog.loc.gov>; National Museum of American Jewish Military History. *An American, a Sailor, and a Jew*. p. 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*. p. 199.
- <sup>27</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*. Title Pages.
- <sup>28</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Navy Maverick*. pp. 131-132, 139.
- <sup>29</sup> Jewish War Veterans, *An Invitation*; Peters, *Justice to the Jew*. p. 95; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, pp. 56-57; Wolf, Simon. *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*. Philadelphia: The Levytype Company. 1895. pp. 78-79.
- <sup>30</sup> McPherson, James M. *Ordeal by Fire; The Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1982. p. 486.
- <sup>31</sup> Wolf, *The American Jew*. p. 424.
- <sup>32</sup> Millet, *For the Common Defense*. p. 154.
- <sup>33</sup> For more details, see: Gumpertz, Sydney G. *The Jewish Legion of Valor*. New York: Sydney G. Gumpertz. 1946. pp. 80-106; Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States*. pp. 199-203; Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot*. pp. 98-424.
- <sup>34</sup> Millet, *For the Common Defense*. pp. 197, 199-201.
- <sup>35</sup> For more information on Civil War Jewish chaplains, see: Barish, Louis, ed. *Rabbis in Uniform*. New York: Jonathan David. 1962; Korn, Bertram W. *American Jewry and the Civil War*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society. 1951; Schappes, *The Jews in the United States*; Slomovitz, Albert Isaac. *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*. New York: New York University Press. 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*. p.57.
- <sup>37</sup> People found this law offensive and wrote letters to Congress and President Lincoln. For more information, see: Bertram W Korn's works: *American Jewry and the Civil War* and "Jewish Chaplains During the Civil War."
- <sup>38</sup> Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*. p. 56.
- <sup>39</sup> Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*. pp. 58, 60.
- <sup>40</sup> Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*. p. 77.
- <sup>41</sup> Korn, "Jewish Chaplains During the Civil War." pp. 14-15.
- <sup>42</sup> Korn, "Jewish Chaplains During the Civil War." pp. 18-22.
- <sup>43</sup> For more details, see: Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America. *Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America: A Century of Patriotic Service to the American People, 1896-1996*. Washington, DC: Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America. 1996.
- <sup>44</sup> The Jewish War Veterans home page: [www.penfed.org/jwv/home.htm](http://www.penfed.org/jwv/home.htm).
- <sup>45</sup> "National Jewish Welfare Board" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 12 (1971): 872-78.
- <sup>46</sup> Jewish War Veterans. *Jews in the World War; A Study in Jewish Patriotism and Heroism*. New York: Jewish War Veterans of the United States. 1941. p. 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Voorsanger, Elkan C. May 3, 1918. "Passover Services in France." Emanu-El. San Francisco, CA. Manuscript Collection No. 256, Elkan C. and Henrietta Voorsanger Papers, 1914-1978. Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH. Hereafter AJA, Voorsanger.
- <sup>48</sup> Memo from Adjutant General, A.E.F. about Observation of Jewish Holidays. August 23, 1918. France. AJA, Voorsanger.
- <sup>49</sup> Voorsanger, Elkan C. May 3, 1918. "Passover Services in France." Emanu-El. San Francisco, CA. AJA, Voorsanger.
- <sup>50</sup> Voorsanger, Elkan C. "A Fighting Rabbi." New York Times, October 12, 1919. Page 8. Manuscript Collection No. 256, Elkan C. and Henrietta Voorsanger Papers, 1914-1978. AJA, Voorsanger.
- <sup>51</sup> Marcus, Jacob Rader. Letter to Family written on September 9, 1918. Manuscript Collection No. 21, Jacob Rader Marcus. Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.
- <sup>52</sup> Levinger, Rabbi Lee J. "The American Jew in the World War." A paper read before the American Jewish Historical Society, May 6, 1923. p. 6. Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.

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<sup>53</sup> Jewish War Veterans of the United States. *Fifteen Jewish Recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor; America's Highest Recognition for Bravery in Combat*. Washington, DC.

<sup>54</sup> Philipson, David. *Our Defense of Our Country*. Cincinnati, OH: The Commission on Public Information about Jews and Judaism. 1947. p. 8.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Halakhic* Issues Military Jews Faced During World War II

Approximately 550,000 Jews served in the United States military during World War II.<sup>1</sup> Also, self-identification was high. One saw this by the number of Jewish chaplains needed to serve on active duty and by the many Jewish soldiers wearing the letter "H" on their identification tags denoting "Hebrew" as their religion. Army officials were aware of the shortage of Jewish chaplains needed to serve the Jewish troops. The Chief of Chaplains of the Army, William R. Arnold sent a letter two days after the outbreak of hostilities to the President of the JWB, Frank L. Weil, stating his concern over a lack of Jewish chaplains and encouraged him and his organization to supply the military "...with a goodly number of...[the] very best rabbis."<sup>2</sup>

The JWB was formed in 1917 to, "serve Jewish personnel in the armed forces [and] continued to function on a limited peace-time basis. It provided liturgical materials, holiday requirements, and some ministration to the small number of Jews who were in the U.S. Army and Navy between the two world wars."<sup>3</sup>

In 1942, in response to the letter sent by the Chief of Chaplains of the Army, the JWB reorganized the structure of its Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities (CANRA)<sup>4</sup> to include representatives from each branch of Judaism thereby creating a nondenominational organization with a common goal: to support Jewish soldiers. Its first acts included revising the prayer book and calendar and abridging the Hebrew Bible for distribution among Jewish military personnel.<sup>5</sup>

Another task undertaken after CANRA's reorganization was to make decisions in regard to Jewish practice during wartime. Not only did many Jews wish to live according to their customs with their religious practice and military service co-existing, they knew certain required military actions would conflict with their traditional Jewish practice. The government also wanted to be respectful to Jewish tradition as it created policies. The Committee on Responsa was formed to answer the questions it received while it helped create military policy toward Jewish personnel. The questions seeking guidance were sent from many people: the government itself, soldiers, sailors, chaplains, civilian rabbis concerned about their congregants participating in the war and men and women in civilian life worried about their relationships to the men and women in the service.<sup>6</sup>

The committee responded to the questions with two paramount ideas in mind. First, it had to maintain the difference between the two concepts of *l'halacha* and *l'maaseh*. The act of *l'halacha* clarified the law by going "...into the question in considerable detail...[and coming to the] conclusion on the basis of the facts and precedents and logic...."<sup>7</sup> The purpose of *l'halacha* was for study clarifying the law, but not for deciding the law. This is the traditional practice in Judaism. The committee, however, was forced to make definite decisions, *l'maaseh* (for the purpose of being a directive in actual practice, deciding the law.)

Second, it was constantly aware of the unique composition of CANRA, its governing body, as being comprised of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews. Each movement had its own attitude toward tradition with Reform being the most liberal and Orthodox being the most traditional. The committee members based decisions on classic Jewish law. "Because of the exigencies of wartime, the more

lenient authorities were generally chosen, and when even the liberal decision would be contrary to the practice of Reform Jews, their exceptional point of view on the matter was specifically provided for. Sometimes, too, the Orthodox member of the committee would record his disagreement."<sup>8</sup>

The committee understood its decisions as applying only to the period of emergency, *horaath shaah*.<sup>9</sup> "In Talmudic law the standards of proof required...were largely reduced where the jurisdiction rested on considerations of 'emergency.'"<sup>10</sup> In other words, "A court in appropriate circumstances may decree a temporary violation of some of the commandments so that their totality will be preserved."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, because the war constituted a period of emergency, the responses given by the committee only referred to situations of *horaath shaah*.

Responding to one question, the committee prefaced its answer by writing:

The CANRA is well aware of the fact that it cannot compel all chaplains to follow the practices of Reform, Orthodoxy or of Conservatism. It tries to achieve a balance of opinion and to avoid violating the conscience of any one of the groups. There are certain compulsory military situations because of which we ask all chaplains to relax certain of their customary religious observances such as in connection with riding on the Sabbath or carrying a burden on the Sabbath. But these matters are such as are directly due to military necessity and are the consequence of direct military command.<sup>12</sup>

The committee members recognized their challenge. Being the authority for Jewish practice in the military, they asked all Jews to adjust their practice to accommodate the military setting. Often in its responses to questions the committee issued guidelines for people to follow rather than authoritative directives.

It also wanted to show authority for its answers. As a result, it sometimes quoted names without giving specific sources. Soldiers had to put their trust in the committee's responses. The committee chairman, Solomon Freehoff, wrote, "...[Since] many of the questions were far from having been decisively treated in

the Jewish legal literature, and many new ones were hardly touched upon at all, our decisions will sometimes seem to have insufficient grounds or not to cover the entire literature, but we did not have the leisure either for completeness or for certainty."<sup>13</sup> This comment illuminates the questions discussed below.

The following is a sampling of some of the questions and subsequent rulings by the Committee on Responsa. The purpose of citing these examples is to get a sense of the *Halakhic* issues Jews in the United States military faced during World War II. Responses sometimes included specific sources for *Halakhic* rulings, other times not. The committee members had to ensure that the answers they gave applied to people of wide-ranging levels of practice in their Judaism.

The issue of daily practice raised continuous questions. Jewish soldiers were sometimes worried about how other people perceived them while being concerned with their own Jewish identity. The first question listed here asks about doing something in conflict with Jewish practice. The answer cited classic Jewish sources. It also explained the legal theory while leaving the final decision to the questioner.

Question: A question was brought to us through a Chaplain with regard to the inquiry of a Jewish nurse as to her wearing a cross with her "dog tag." The chaplain stated that the question was raised with reference to the possibility of becoming stranded somewhere in the South Pacific area where in many instances the natives had come to recognize the cross as the only sure symbol of friendship.

Answer: In the discussion in *Yore Deah* 178,1, where the question is raised about Jews wearing the garments of non-Jews as to when that is prohibited and when permitted, the commentator Sifthe Cohen says that in times of persecution it is certainly permitted for a Jew to disguise himself by wearing non-Jewish clothes. Thus, if, for example, the question were whether Jewish soldiers fighting on the European continent might not be permitted to conceal their Jewish identity by wearing "dog-tags" without the letter "H" so that, if captured by the Nazis they would not be mistreated, the answer would be that this is certainly permitted.



However, such concealing of Jewish identity cannot be permitted in the South Seas where there is no question of persecution of Jews. The question specifically, however, is not one of concealing Jewish identity, but of wearing the cross in order to win the friendship of natives in the South Seas who are accustomed to consider the cross as a symbol of friendship. The law on this matter is quite clear.

*Schulchan Aruch, Yore Deah, 141, 1*, Joseph Karo discussing which statues are to be considered idols and which are not, says that the statues in villages are to be considered idols since they are meant to be bowed down to. Those in great cities are not to be considered idols since they are merely for decoration. To this Moses Isserles comments as follows: "A cross which is meant to be bowed down to is forbidden, but one that is worn around the neck is merely a memento and is not forbidden." Thus, the law is clear.

To use a cross as the nurse intended to is not forbidden by law, but since it is clearly against general Jewish sentiment, the Committee refrains from advising on this matter. She herself must judge how grave the danger is and how much help the symbol would give her.<sup>14</sup>

Moses Isserles' comment referred to what kind of cross a Jew may sell, not to what kind a Jew may wear. The committee used a *hidush*, an exception or unique law, to decide how to approach this matter.

Another question of daily practice focused on head covering during the playing of the National Anthem. Soldiers were worried about the conflict between military practice and Jewish tradition. The committee derived its answer not from Jewish sources, but rather from military guidelines.

Question: Should Orthodox men uncover their heads for the singing of the National Anthem and "America" at religious services?

Answer: This question is indirectly referred to in the section on Military Discipline and Courtesy in the Soldiers' Handbook (FM 21-100) page 12, paragraph K, which states that whenever the National Anthem is played the hat is worn by men in uniform and removed by men in civilian clothes. This would imply that even where the service is Reform, the heads would have to be covered for the playing or singing of the National Anthem.<sup>15</sup>

This answer avoided the Jewish interpretation of the law requiring people to cover their heads thereby avoided the internal Jewish debate of wearing a *kippah* at all.

Other questions dealt with dietary laws. It was often difficult to keep *kosher* in a military setting and some soldiers felt strongly about continuing their Jewish practice.

Question: How far are men justified in violating the dietary laws under different conditions of camp life?

Answer: They should try to observe them as much as possible.

The chaplain should make known to men desiring to observe the dietary laws that *kosher* canned meats are available at the Post Exchanges and through the Jewish Welfare Board representatives, and that, while in this country, men may receive packages of *kosher* food from relatives or friends. If in certain circumstances it is impossible to obtain *kosher* food, then they are not committing a sin because they are under the compulsion of government military law.

However, a soldier who desires to follow the dietary laws should follow the spirit of Ezekiel Landau's advice, to observe Jewish practice as much as possible. Therefore, he should try as much as he can to make a distinction between various degrees of prohibition. He ought to be more reluctant about eating inherently forbidden foods. Less weight can be ascribed to partaking of such meat products as are not inherently forbidden but which are not *kosher* because they have not been prepared by *Shechitah* or *Melichah*, and still less significance need be given to violations of *Taaruveth* and of such rabbinic ordinances as were established *Mippnei Marath Ayin*, such as those against dairy products together with fowl.<sup>16</sup>

The JWB tried to help the Jewish soldier keep *kosher* as much as possible when in the states. When abroad, it was much harder to do so. In this situation, it was considered legally justified not to keep *kosher* because the soldier was considered as being *onus*, under unavoidable interference to act a certain way. Therefore, the *Halakhic* status of the soldier was *patur*, exempt from fulfilling the specific mitzvah of keeping *kosher*.

A special committee of CANRA, the *Kashruth* Committee, was formed to enable Jewish soldiers to keep *kosher* if they should so choose. On November 3, 1943, a report of this committee explained the request by the War Department that the JWB assist personnel to follow the Jewish dietary laws and the response on the subject from the *Kashruth* Committee.<sup>17</sup>

Another group of questions dealt with the practice of Shabbat and prayer rituals. Sometimes, observance needed to be adjusted in order to carry out the tradition. Chaplains were concerned with the ritual practices done as a result of *horaath shaah* conflicting with traditional practice and thereby becoming the norm. The sample question here focused on Torah reading.

Question: (a) May the Torah be read at any time other than the Sabbath services?

Answer: Yes. According to Jewish tradition the Torah is read not only on Saturday morning, but on Saturday afternoon, on Monday and Thursday mornings, on New Moons, on fast-days, on the festivals and even on the half-holidays of the festivals.

Question: (b) May part of the weekly portion be read at any time other than at the Saturday services?

Answer: Generally yes. Part of the weekly portion is read on Sabbath afternoon and on Monday and Thursday. The reading on Monday and Thursday was made for the convenience of the people who came in to town on those two days, which were market days. This custom of reading the regular portion or part of it on Monday and Thursday at a time convenient for the people is so ancient that it is even ascribed to Ezra.

Question: (c) May the Torah be read on Friday night?

Answer: There is a partial precedent for the reading of the Torah on the evening of *Simchat Torah*, and while the Union Prayerbook (Newly Revised) has made provision for the voluntary reading of the Torah on Friday evening, nevertheless, Orthodox and Conservative Jews would not consider this a precedent. However, if in the armed forces it is impossible to read the Torah at any other time during the week, we may as a *horaath shaah* say that such reading of the Torah may be conducted. It should be announced as such at every Friday evening service. Moreover, whether the Torah is read or not, it should

still be kept in the Ark for its symbolic significance at all services.<sup>18</sup>

The committee reached this answer by beginning with different times the Torah may be read. The first and second answers were obvious to the educated Jew. The third response was the important one. Ultimately, the Jewish soldier wanted to know if tradition allowed the Torah to be read on Friday nights. On any given installation, it was possible that there were not Saturday morning services or the Torah could not be read at a different time. The committee concluded that it was all right to read Torah on Friday nights as long as it was stated at every Friday night service that the Torah was being read as a temporary activity and not as setting a precedent for time after military service.

The committee also stressed the importance of having a Torah present at services even if it were not being read. This provided a feeling of normality in a non-normal time.

By extension of this answer, the committee arrived at its solution to the next question:

Question: May the Haftarah be read on Friday nights?

Answer: There can be no objection to reading from the Prophets, since we permit as a temporary war custom the reading of the Torah on Friday night.<sup>19</sup>

Marriage and divorce was another significant topic discussed. The committee recognized that it focused on issues dealing with personnel in the military whereas marriage dealt primarily with life outside the military. As a result, it tried to limit the questions it looked at on this topic. Even so, concerns about marriage did arise among soldiers and sailors. The committee tried to assist these questioners and their chaplains. The following are two sample questions about marriage.

Question: The question is asked by a JWB worker as to whether he may arrange for a Christian chaplain or for a Justice of the Peace to officiate at the wedding of a Jewish couple when no Jewish chaplain or civilian rabbi is available.

Answer: In Jewish law and tradition marriage is a *Kidushin* or sacrament. While the civil validity of a civil or non-denominational marriage ceremony is necessarily recognized, such a wedding is not regarded as satisfying religious or Jewish requirements. Therefore, when a Jewish uniformed man presents himself with the request that the arrangements be made for his marriage, it is not Jewishly admissible to arrange for a civil ceremony to be performed by a Justice of the Peace or a non-Jewish chaplain or minister.

If no Jewish chaplain or rabbi is readily available, a rabbi or some other Jewish communal functionary authorized by the state to perform marriages, must be brought in, even if it be from some distance or at some inconvenience. Otherwise the Jewish Welfare Board representative will be in the position of arranging for these two Jews to live together in a relationship which is not sanctioned as marriage under Jewish tradition.<sup>20</sup>

The first answer was that marriage was considered a religious ceremony not a civil transaction. Did the committee members forget that a Jewish marriage does not need a rabbi, rather two Jewish witnesses and a financial exchange? They could have printed instructions for carrying out *Kidushin*. The committee probably did not forget. It likely wanted to ensure that someone who was knowledgeable witnessed the event and only trusted other rabbis to do this *mitzvah*. In the United States, clergy members perform religious marriage ceremonies and the rabbis did not want Jews to circumvent their authority. The committee also exaggerated the important role religion played in a soldier's life. After all, despite committee conclusions, a couple married through civil means would still be considered as having a valid marriage under Jewish law.

With the next question, the committee focused on the difference between *Din* and *Minhag*. *Din* is a binding formal legal enactment. *Minhag* is an accepted

custom and "...one of the formative factors in the development of Jewish law and religious observance."<sup>21</sup>

Question: May a chaplain officiate at a marriage on Friday night?

Answer: The CANRA again calls attention of the chaplains to the decision of the Responsa Committee accepted by the CANRA on November 16, 1942, that "marriages under special conditions of wartime in camps may take place on certain days hitherto prohibited by *Minhag* as, for example, the period of the *Omer*, but may not take place on days prohibited by *Din*, as for example, the Sabbath."<sup>22</sup>

The committee's answer stressed *Din* over *Minhag*, law over custom.

Another group of questions looked at customs surrounding burial and mourning. Not surprisingly, soldiers, sailors and chaplains dealt with death directly. As a result, they needed to know the rules and receive guidance about their practice. The first question focused on mourning. The next focused on dress of the military dead followed by a question about the position of the individual officiating at the graveside funeral. The final questions on this topic referred to the traditional recitation of *Kaddish* when there was no minyan.

Question: May *K'riah* be performed, since the uniform may not be mutilated?

An inquiry came from a chaplain with regard to a soldier who received a telegram from home announcing the death of his father. The soldier wanted to know whether he could perform the *K'riah* since the army uniform may not be mutilated.

Answer: When *K'riah* is to be performed the underclothing over the heart should be cut.<sup>23</sup>

According to Jewish law, this answer was another example of *horaath shaah*. For children mourning their parents, their clothes should be rent over their hearts with the tear remaining visible, the act of *K'riah*.<sup>24</sup> The committee's answer balanced the military tradition of keeping the uniform from being mutilated and the Jewish tradition of tearing one's clothes during mourning.

**Question:** The military custom is to have the man's service cap in his hand rather than upon his head. Should the chaplain request that the cap be placed upon the head of the soldier who is to be buried?

**Answer:** If the deceased was known to the chaplain as an observing Orthodox Jew or if the chaplain knows that the family of the deceased would prefer it so, he may ask that the cap be placed upon the head of the deceased.<sup>25</sup>

**Question:** A chaplain says that he has always been accustomed to stand at the foot of the grave during the ceremony. In the army reservations the graves do not face east and army regulations seem to require that the chaplain stand at the head of the grave.

**Answer:** Whether graves should be east and west and whether the head of the body should be towards the east or west or in any specified direction is a matter not of law but of *Minhag*. Moses Sofer denies that the *Minhag* has any basis in law, and he calls attention to the graves discussed in *Baba Bathra* VI, 8, where the niches are cut in all directions.

There is therefore no objection in Jewish law to the chaplain conforming to army practice and standing at the head of the grave during the funeral service.<sup>26</sup>

**Question:** May a soldier or sailor who is on lonely outpost duty for a considerable period of time (as for example, men on coast guard duty) in the event of *Yahrzeit* say *Kaddish* alone, since he cannot possibly assemble a *minyan*?

**Answer:** Just as in the case of the *tefillah* it is preferable to say it with the congregation and yet it is permitted to be said silently alone, so the *Kaddish* which is primarily part of the congregational response may also be recited silently alone.

Furthermore, the CANRA will arrange for *Kaddish* to be recited in a congregation in honor of the departed relative of any soldier or sailor who writes in to CANRA or makes such arrangement with the chaplain. The soldier or sailor should report the date of the *Yahrzeit* and the name of the relative.<sup>27</sup>

The committee answered this last question from three different perspectives allowing a soldier to choose a comfortable response or responses.

The first perspective was the analogy between the recitation of *tefillah* and *Kaddish*. This analogy was faulty. One is obligated to say *tefillah*, whether alone or with a congregation. Reciting it with a congregation allowed all of the

congregational responses to be included. Saying it alone one did not include those parts. With the *Kaddish*, one was not supposed to recite it without a *minyan*.

The second option was the idea of reciting *Kaddish* silently, alone. To recite something meant to say it aloud. By reciting it silently, the soldier was essentially reading *Kaddish* without fulfilling the *mitzvah* of reciting it aloud.

As a result, CANRA gave military personnel yet a third option. If a soldier was uncomfortable with reciting *Kaddish* silently, the name of the person being mourned might be given to CANRA. This would ensure that *Kaddish* was recited in the customary fashion, publicly and aloud, for this person.

Specific *Halakhic* and religious issues pertaining to Jews in the United States military during World War II were important. To substantiate the *Halakhic* issues already discussed, permissiveness of Jewish participation in a non-Jewish military setting must now be looked at.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffmann<sup>28</sup> (1843-1921) wrote a responsum<sup>29</sup> on the issue of sanctioning Jewish participation in a non-Jewish military. Was it likely that Jews in America were aware of the article? Probably not. Even so, this responsum showed the early universal significance of Jewish concerns in regard to military service. Hoffmann's findings may be applied to the American Jewish soldiers in World War II.

Hoffmann expressed his patriotism while writing with a specific purpose in mind proving the importance of military service to one's country. His introduction and conclusion contain a fervor of patriotism. At times, Hoffmann appeared to be reading into the sources. Ultimately, he got his point across by stating that if one



must serve in the military, serve in the military. He wanted the reader to understand that it was all right to act as a citizen of the country in which one lived.

Rabbi Hoffmann centered his discussion on the obligations of the citizen. "Today, the majority of responses of the Jews, according to the dictates of the king and the state, every person that is healthy, needs to enter the army to strengthen the war and to fulfill [the quota of] his (i.e. the king's) soldiers there [for] a year, two years, or three years. [Since] he (i.e. the Jew) is compelled there [he is going to] profane Sabbaths and holidays. Is the God fearing Jew, who observes all the *mitzvot* of the Torah, obligated to do all that is possible to exempt himself from military service in order that he does not come to do the act of profaning Shabbat or not?"

Hoffmann looked primarily at two specific issues discussed in Jewish texts citing rabbinical sources and commentaries on each topic.

The first topic he discussed was sailing on or near Shabbat.

We read in chapter one of *Shabbat* page 19: side aleph. "The Rabbis taught [in a *baraita*<sup>30</sup>] one may not embark on a [trip by] ship less than three days before Shabbat. When are these words said? [When one embarks] for an unimportant matter. But, [if one embarks] for a matter pertaining to a *mitzvah*, it is all right [to embark on a trip less than three days before Shabbat] as long as he stipulates with him (i.e. the ship's captain) on condition that [the Gentile] does not sail on Shabbat. Even [if the Gentile] will not refrain on Shabbat, [the Jew may still sail.] These are the words of Rabbi."

He wanted to prove that one may sail on Shabbat if it was necessary, an act that might take place in a military setting.

The next issue was laying siege to a city on Shabbat.

There it says further (i.e. a little later in the Talmud), "The rabbis taught [in a *baraita*] one may not lay siege to a Gentile city less than three days before Shabbat. If they began the siege, they do not lift it. So it was Shammai who said [in reference to fighting the war on Shabbat], in regard to the Toraitic command [from Deuteronomy 20:20] to wage war against the enemy, until it is conquered [the war should be continued] even on Shabbat."

Hoffmann continued to try justifying military activity on Shabbat by quoting a commentary about sailing on Shabbat.

...That the reason that one may not sail and one may not lay siege is because it is a place (i.e. situation) of danger. The three days prior to Shabbat are called "before Shabbat" (i.e. for *Halakhic* purposes). [If one were to begin a voyage or a siege during this three day period] it would appear as though he were stipulating that Shabbat be suspended, on the grounds that nothing is allowed to stand in the way of saving life (i.e. to begin an inherently dangerous activity three days or less before Shabbat practically guarantees that one will have to suspend Shabbat, since issues of *pikuach nefesh*, saving lives, are bound to arise on that day).

The same is the case with setting forth on an overland journey in the wilderness or to any dangerous place. One will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat. Here concludes the words of Razah, who is quoted by Rabbenu Nissim [in his commentary to the] *Halakhot* [of Alfasi].<sup>31</sup>

This proof text supported Hoffmann's argument that in military service Jews were permitted to desecrate Shabbat if necessary.

Hoffmann continued with a discussion of desecrating Shabbat for the purposes of a *mitzvah*. He wrote, "For the purposes of a *mitzvah* it is permitted to start the trip even on the day before Shabbat (i.e. Friday). As we read in the Talmud, 'To what do these words refer? [They refer] to a matter that is optional. But for purposes of a *mitzvah* it is perfectly permissible in the opinion of R. Zerachiah and R. Nissim, even when one will certainly have to profane Shabbat [after having begun the trip the day before]....'"

He continued in his own words, "But it is obvious that if any *mitzvah* would be nullified if the act were delayed, it would be permitted to perform that act even on Friday and even though one would be led, by doing it, to desecrate Shabbat in a situation of danger."

Hoffmann concluded by stating that it was permissible and preferable for Jews to fight in the military of a non-Jewish state in which they lived. He did this by bringing in authoritative texts and use of patriotic language.

We now come to our subject that one should not utilize some strategy to evade military service is without question a requirement that is even greater than a "matter of *mitzvah*." Whoever does so (i.e. evading military service) causes, God forbid, a desecration of the divine name (Leviticus 22:32; Ramban, *Hilkot Yesodey Hatorah* 5:1) should his act become known. He also causes harm to the Jews, for the enemies of the Jews claim that the Jews do not observe the laws of the state.

So from this we learn that if the one that goes to the army on Sunday, Monday, [or] Tuesday, he does not do [that which is] forbidden to the majority of the *poskim* (rabbinic authority on *Halakhic* questions) even if he will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat by accident.

We learn as well that if he does this for the sake of a *mitzvah* for example to save Jewish lives or for any other *mitzvah*, it is permitted even on Friday for him to go voluntarily to the army (i.e. that is going to war).

If so, then how much more [is this permitted] if he does not go of his own accord but is rather taken (i.e. conscripted) by the state. In such a case, he is certainly not obliged to evade service, even if he will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat as a result. For should he evade service, he will cause any number of serious problems. Therefore, to do nothing (i.e. to take no action but simply to let himself be conscripted) in this situation is an even higher duty than to take action for the sake of a *mitzvah*.

Further if we say that one is obligated to free himself so that he does not come to the desecration of Shabbat, then every Jewish man will find himself obligated to do so. Certainly the majority of them will not succeed, so that they would be desecrating God's name [Heaven forbid] for no good reason.

Therefore, the best course is to obey the command of the king (as it states in Ecclesiastes 8:2). Perhaps you will find favor with the officers and they will permit you to observe Shabbat so that you can do that which is good in the sight of God and mankind alike.

The question of Jewish military service did not stop with Hoffmann's responsum. It continues to be discussed today.

One century later, Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik wrote an article entitled, "Waging War on Shabbat."<sup>32</sup> Like Hoffmann, he discussed issues relevant to Jews

fighting in the army on Shabbat. In contrast to Hoffmann, Soloveichik did not express the same feelings of American patriotism, but did express a feeling of Israeli patriotism. His intent was to justify Israel fighting on Shabbat if necessary, but his understanding could have been applied to Jews in militaries outside of Israel.

Soloveichik's argument was threefold. The first was legitimate war on Shabbat. He wrote, "...it is forbidden to start a war on Shabbat. The war is to be initiated three days prior to Shabbat; but if it was started three days or less before Shabbat it can be continued without interruption, on Shabbat as well."<sup>33</sup> This argument agreed with Hoffmann's article.

The second topic Soloveichik discussed was *pikuah nefesh*. He referred to text from *Eruvin* 45a to the discussion.

Rav Yehudah said in the name of the Rav: If Gentiles besieged a Jewish town (on Shabbat) one is not allowed to go forth against them with weapons and it is forbidden to violate the Shabbat because of the siege. Similarly, it was stated (in a *baraita*): If Gentiles besieged Jewish towns...When is this the case? Only when the goal of the siege is to appropriate possessions (without intending to kill any Jews). However, if the intention of the Gentiles is to kill Jews, then one must go forth against the aggressors with weapons, and one is allowed to violate the Shabbat to repel the attack. If the attack was on a border city, even if the purpose was to appropriate from the Jews straw and stubble, the Jews are to go forth with their weapons, and may violate the Shabbat.<sup>34</sup>

This passage showed that it was permissible to wage war on Shabbat in defense of life against a hostile army. Ultimately, *pikuah nefesh* overrode Shabbat.

The third aspect discussed by Soloveichik was the role of the *rodef* (the pursuer). He explained that, "This is the law that mandates when a person pursues another person to kill him the pursued party has the *Halakhic* right to kill the aggressor in order to save his own life."<sup>35</sup>

Soloveichik utilized classic Jewish texts and logical reasoning to prove his points. One must keep in mind that his intent was to support the Israeli army fighting and Israeli civilians defending themselves on Shabbat. At the same time however, one can apply his reasoning to Jews of other countries.

*Halakha* as a source of permission to fight in the military is important. However, it only applies to Jews who follow it. Jews who do not follow *Halakha* do not face the same problems when serving in the armed forces. *Halakha* has been used here as a frame of reference to begin understanding Jews serving in the United States.

To have a better comprehension of Jewish soldiers' and sailors' lives in the United States military during World War II, one needs to look at their actual experience. With what kind of anti-Jewish acts did they have to deal? Were they able to practice their Judaism? Was the experience positive for them?

<sup>1</sup> Slomovitz, Albert Isaac. *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*. New York: New York University Press. 1999. p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Bernstein, Philip S. *Rabbis at War*. Waltham, MA: American Jewish Historical Society. 1971. p. 1 in preface.

<sup>3</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. p. 1 in introduction.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see: Barish, Louis, ed. *Rabbis in Uniform*. New York: Jonathan David. 1962; Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*; Freehof, Solomon B., Responsa Committee Chairman for Division of Religious Activities, National Jewish Welfare Board. *Responsa in War Time*. New York: Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy, National Jewish Welfare Board. 1968; Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis*.

<sup>5</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. i.

<sup>7</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. iii.

<sup>8</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. iv.

<sup>9</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. pp. iv-v.

<sup>10</sup> Elon, Menachem. *The Principles of Jewish Law*. Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd. 1975. p. 600.

<sup>11</sup> Hilkhhot Mamrim 2.4.

<sup>12</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. iii.

<sup>14</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. pp. 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see: Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*; "Report of Kashrut Committee. November 3, 1943. Solomon Freehoff File: American Jewish Archives. Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>18</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. pp. 19-20.

<sup>19</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 22.

<sup>21</sup> "Minhag" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1997. p. 465.

<sup>22</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Lamm, Maurice. *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*. New York: Jonathan David Publishers. 1969. p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> Freehof, *Responsa in War Time*. p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffmann, see: Brown, Jonathan M. "Modern Challenges to Halakhah as Reflected in David Hoffmann's Melammed Leho'il." Rabbinical thesis, Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. 1967; "Hoffmann, David Zevi" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 8 (1971): 808-810.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix A for full text and translation of the Responsum.

<sup>30</sup> "A *baraita* is a piece of tradition appearing in one of the Talmuds but attributed to a rabbinic teacher who lived in the time of the Mishnah or earlier. All such early traditions, though not part of the Mishnah itself, were held by later teachers to be authoritative in some way, but since they often contradicted one another, and since later teachers also often felt free to disregard them, the exact nature of that authority is hard to determine. At the very least it can be said that no such tradition could simply be ignored. If a *baraita* was quoted in the course of a discussion, its meaning and its implications necessarily had to be explored. Any later teacher could strengthen the authority of his opinion by quoting a *baraita* in its support." Holtz, Barry W. *Back to the Sources*. New York: Touchstone. 1984. pp. 137-38.

<sup>31</sup> The commentary quoted is by R. Zerachiah Halevy.

<sup>32</sup> Soloveichik, Aaron. "Waging War on Shabbat." *Tradition - A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*. 20 (Fall 1982): 179-87.

<sup>33</sup> Soloveichik, "Waging War on Shabbat." p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> Soloveichik, "Waging War on Shabbat." p. 183.

<sup>35</sup> Soloveichik, "Waging War on Shabbat." p. 185.

## CHAPTER 3

### A Taste of American Jews' Experience in the Armed Forces during World War II

Fighting in World War II, 1939 - 1945, necessitated an enormous military, by far the largest in United States history. Generally, World War II has been viewed as the "good war," a popular war. Contributing to this view was the image of both the Germans challenging European countries by conquering or occupying them and the Japanese aggression toward their neighboring countries.<sup>1</sup>

The United States entered the war on December 8, 1941, the day after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. By the end of the war, over 16.3 million Americans had fought on behalf of the United States<sup>2</sup> and about 300,000 had died for their country.<sup>3</sup> Many people volunteered while many others were drafted, making citizen-soldier armed forces a mixture of volunteer and conscript along with professional soldiers, as was the case in earlier American conflicts.

According to historian Gary Hess, "Americans waged a war in which national pride was at stake to a degree unparalleled in the American experience....The Axis powers....threatened the survival of traditions of western civilization: belief in dignity of the individual; commitment to civil liberties; toleration of racial, religious, and ethnic diversity; republican government within a democratic framework. For the American nation, the war constituted the price of freedom."<sup>4</sup> These traditions, while being threatened, had a positive impact on the Jewish community. As a result, many Jews fought both in support of these ideas and to defend the rights and freedoms found in the United States.

Numerous Jews who served were refugees from Europe eager to return and fight against the Axis Powers who had disrupted their lives. Adolf Hitler,

supported by the National Socialist Party (Nazi), promised that this war would lead to the extermination of European Jews, Europe would be *Judenrein* (Jew free).<sup>5</sup> For these reasons and others, Jewish participation in the United States military was larger than in each previous war in both raw numbers and by percentages.<sup>6</sup>

Over 550,000 Jewish men and women served their country<sup>7</sup> and about 10,500 died.<sup>8</sup> This number shows that the American Jews were well represented in the military and participated as much as other ethnic groups. In life as in death, Jews were illustrative of the rest of the United States population.

Joining the military caused a disruption in the everyday life of those who served and the families they left behind. It was very likely that the following situation was not unique: a soldier from Baltimore or Denver, which were cities with large Jewish populations, found himself living in rural Georgia with a small if any Jewish population. New Jewish recruits that lived in or near large cities often found themselves at bases located in rural areas of the country where very few Jews lived. Sometimes, this gave them an experience of anti-Jewish attitudes that were more apparent in rural America.<sup>9</sup> Other times, the Jews were 'strangers' in these areas because the local residents had never interacted with Jews. It is not that people necessarily hated Jews, it was just that they had not known any.<sup>10</sup>

With many of the Jews feeling a sense of separation from home, the loss of the setting for whatever Jewish practice they observed, and a loss of a connection to the Jewish community, the role of the chaplaincy was vital. Although there were 311 Jewish commissioned chaplains, a significant increase over numbers in the past, the military still did not have enough Jewish chaplains to meet the needs of the Jewish troops. During the war there was approximately one Jewish chaplain



for every 2000 Jewish personnel compared to one non-Jewish chaplain for every 1000 non-Jewish personnel.<sup>11</sup> The major reason for this shortfall was because the military filled chaplain positions for the first years of the war based on 1936 census figures. This identified the forty faith groups most prevalent in the military with each group receiving a proportional number of clergy.<sup>12</sup> In addition, many of the rabbis who applied were rejected as a result of their age or because of a medical disqualification.<sup>13</sup>

With the shortage of chaplains, many civilian rabbis stepped in to lead special services and assist Jewish troops. Some were chosen to serve camps and hospitals across the country.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the war, civilian rabbis in locations near military installations also assisted Jewish soldiers who needed help. Even so, at the end of the war, more rabbis were still being requested for service by commanders in both the European and Pacific theaters of war.<sup>15</sup>

Jewish soldiers' and sailors' experiences during wartime were comparable to those of Gentile soldiers. As a religious minority, however, they did have certain experiences that were unique. Some Gentile soldiers looked at Jews differently because of prejudice, which sometimes led to anti-Jewish behavior. Jews observed Shabbat from Friday to Saturday as opposed to Sunday when most of the other troops observed their Sabbath. This led to Jews having to adjust their level of observance. Jewish holidays, frequently occurring mid-week or at times that were incompatible with wartime activities, made it difficult for the Jewish soldier and sailor to be observant. Some Jews in the military tried to observe the dietary laws, which was difficult to accomplish. Despite these challenges, Jews took part in the war effort, which helped to emphasize their American citizenship.

Military service is one part of a process in which children of immigrants and immigrants themselves were acculturated into American society. As Deborah Dash Moore wrote, "This feeling of affiliation with a great power and the sense that they [Jewish soldiers were] symbolizing the principles for which this power went to battle made many of the same young Jewish men begin to consider the Jewish religion as a positive asset."<sup>16</sup> This identification was reinforced by the support given by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations to Jews in the military and the many positive interactions of Jewish and Gentile soldiers alike. Military life fostered a spirit of brotherhood. People of all faiths learned how to work together for the good of the commonwealth.

As World War II veterans are dying off, there has been a determined effort to document their war stories. Movies such as "Saving Private Ryan" and "The Thin Red Line," along with the willingness of Americans to donate money to build a World War II memorial in Washington, DC -- to say nothing of the many old and new books and articles on the subject -- all illustrate this tendency. However, there has not been a great amount of work done specifically on the Jewish experience in the United States military during World War II.<sup>17</sup>

Archives, such as The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, the American Jewish Historical Society, the United States Army Military History Institute and the Jewish War Veterans Museum, house many records that tell the story of individual Jews. The documents include diaries, letters, manuscripts, surveys and much more. To date, few have sought to offer an interpretation of a Jewish experience in World War II. This chapter begins this effort.

The following will focus on oral interviews of Jewish World War II veterans<sup>18</sup> conducted by the author. These interviews have been supplemented by material found in other primary and secondary sources. The selection of the ten veterans was random. Veterans' names were given by contacts in Lexington, Kentucky, Cincinnati, Ohio and St. Louis, Missouri. They include one of the author's professors along with a family friend's uncle. Unfortunately, the search for interviewees did not unearth any of the women who served although a few wives sat in on the interview and contributed to the reminiscences. Interviews were held in the interviewee's home to ensure comfortableness.

The questions<sup>19</sup> at each interview followed the same format. As each veteran told his story the interviewer encouraged him to enlarge particular aspects. The basic format began with demographic data and questions about general family background and then focused on the matter of religious upbringing. Each veteran was then asked about his active duty service focusing on why he joined the military, where he served and his military occupation specialty. The questioning then explored the interviewee's level of Jewish practice in the service, including his observance of Jewish holidays and his ability to pray in the military setting. The interview continued with questions about barriers to the practice of Judaism and concluded with an exploration of any anti-Semitic expressions that the veteran may have encountered during his time in the service.

A cornucopia of interesting facts about the interviewees ultimately emerged. They described different levels of Jewish practice before entering the military service and a variety of experiences during the war.

Of those interviewed, six had enlisted and four were drafted. They served around the world including Europe, India, the Pacific, stateside, and one was even

a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Their military jobs included airplane pilot, airplane mechanic, bombardier, navigator, engineer aviation, radio operator, radio instructor, infantryman, interpreter, clerk, ordnance, finance worker and strength recorder.

Half of the interviewees described their upbringing as Orthodox. Others recalled being raised in Jewish homes where they observed some holidays but did not consider themselves as having an Orthodox upbringing. Some testified to keeping *kosher*, some recalled going to *cheder*,<sup>20</sup> some remembered going to religious school or Hebrew school (a supplemental Jewish education), a few recollected "attending *shul*" (literally a synagogue, but "attending *shul*" simply refers to going to services held at a synagogue) weekly, others testified to going to "*shul*" occasionally and most told of celebrating Shabbat at least by the lighting of candles with a festive meal. All commented on their observing the High Holy Days and keeping at least a "*kosher* style" (i.e. no bread) kitchen for Passover.

The subsequent discussion will be based, in large part, on the reminiscences of these individual Jews. Did they encounter anti-Jewish acts? What opportunities did they have to practice their Judaism? Did they have the chance to pray with other Jews or to observe Shabbat in any fashion? Were they able to celebrate and observe Passover or the High Holy Days? Could they follow the dietary laws if they so desired? The focus will be on the experiences of regular soldiers and sailors supplemented by stories from chaplains.<sup>21</sup>

### Encountering Anti-Jewish Behavior

As might be expected, some Jewish soldiers and sailors encountered anti-Jewish attitudes while others did not. Interestingly, anti-Jewish acts were more frequent farther from the battlefield and were more often experienced at stateside locations. James Westheider wrote about racism during the Vietnam War from which parallels can be drawn to the anti-Jewish behavior in World War II.

Westheider notes that "in any situation of great stress, racial differences between blacks and whites have disappeared on the fighting fronts. At the front, the main thing is to stay alive and you do this most often by depending on the man next to you. Combat and the threat of death are great equalizers, and both white and black veterans who served in line companies have claimed there was a solidarity and camaraderie between the races."<sup>22</sup> However, the farther a soldier or sailor was from the front, closer to home, the more old prejudices surfaced.

Westheider's analysis helps to define a model that could be applied to the Jewish experience in the military during World War II. In the front lines, people were not as concerned with background; what mattered was the work one did. It is in these places that the following stories will begin.

Some of the veterans interviewed recalled having occasionally had to defend their faith against those who challenged it. Of those interviewed, no one experienced sustained examples of anti-Jewish behavior. However, several described incidents of out and out anti-Jewish acts, some of an extreme nature. One veteran spoke about a fight he had on the ship going overseas. "We were in the ship...and I heard this guy say, 'When I get over there if I see a Jew and a German I am going to shoot the Jew first....' We had a little fight and they pulled us apart. I just hit him as hard as I could."<sup>23</sup>

Another veteran described an encounter he had with a soldier from a German background. "I remember one fellow...from a German family. He's in the American service....He claimed Hitler did some good." <sup>24</sup>

Early in the war, with fewer Jews in the military, anti-Jewish attitudes were more prevalent.<sup>25</sup> A soldier described his encounter with anti-Semitism. "Early in 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia, when we were only a few Jewish draftees among thousands of non-Jews...we were frequently needled by Christian soldiers with [comments such as] 'Where are the Jews?'" One reason for the low numbers of Jewish enlistees was because not many Jews joined the Regular Army, National Guard or Reserves in the 1930's and 1940-41.<sup>26</sup>

Sensitivity among Jews to anti-Jewish attitudes existed partially because of a lack of significant numbers of Jews. Some Jewish soldiers and sailors felt as though they were picked on because they were Jewish. On the other hand some believed that Gentiles "...generally think less of those Jews who conceal their Jewishness and they usually pick on such Jews with various insinuations about their Jewishness."<sup>27</sup>

After Jews started entering the military in larger numbers, some non-Jewish chaplains asked, "Where are the Jewish chaplains?"<sup>28</sup> This comment expressed a feeling of anger or even anti-Semitism toward the rabbis who had not yet joined when the need for Jewish chaplains was so evident.

On the other hand, some of the individual Jewish responses were "...courageous acts...[that] evoked respect toward them [the Jews] among the Christians."<sup>29</sup> An example of this is a story of someone who worked in a chemical lab in the army.

A German-American, a Hitlerite, also worked there and he used to make insolent, anti-Semitic remarks. Our narrator showed no reaction. None of his Christian colleagues ever said anything to stop the German. The Jewish boy felt badly because of this and he was sure that all the Christians in the laboratory shared the German's views. One morning the German came in and loudly declared that it would be a good idea if all the American Jews were handed over to Hitler so that he might make an end of them too. This our Jew could not take any more. He fell upon the German with his fists and gave him a sound thrashing. His Christian comrades thereupon all came over to him and congratulated him warmly. For many weeks after that no one spoke to the German.<sup>30</sup>

This story and others describing incidents of Jewish soldiers experiencing anti-Jewish acts are found in the essays entered in a contest among Jews in the American army entitled, "My Experiences and Observations as a Jew in World War II."<sup>31</sup> YIVO Institute for Jewish Research conducted this contest in 1946 receiving 52 essays.<sup>32</sup>

Another example of a blatantly anti-Jewish act was reported about Sidney Epstein. As a Jewish soldier, he fought to prove that Jews were capable of doing the same work as everyone else. In some cases hatred of Jews was directed toward those only thought to be Jewish.

Sidney was in the army one week. They were on a long hike and the day was hot. A chap in front of him became exhausted and was about to drop. Sidney called the sergeant's attention to the chap's condition. For answer the sergeant bellowed: "You Jews are all softies and always looking for something easy." Sidney was not used to taking such talk and told the sergeant if he didn't have his stripes he would show him how soft Jews are. When the sergeant told him to forget the stripes, Sidney proceeded to administer a sound thrashing and two black eyes. When the C.O. heard about the whole story, he commended Sidney. The boy for whom Sidney had interceded happened to be an Irish boy.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, there were individual extreme cases of troops being anti-Jewish. However, many veterans noted that even though they did not recall experiencing any overt anti-Jewish behavior, they did sense an anti-Jewish feeling under the surface. As one soldier reported, "[Maybe] I didn't even recognize [a specific act of prejudice] as anything anti-Semitic." For example, he encountered a lieutenant who was obnoxious toward him, but did not assume this behavior was due to

prejudice against Jews.<sup>34</sup> It is likely that similar incidents took place, but Jewish soldiers did not perceive them as acts of anti-Semitism. Instead, it is possible that those who were otherwise offensive perpetrated such acts and they went unrecognized. Also, it is possible veterans have unconsciously sanitized the memory of unpleasantness and do not recall the incidents as they actually happened. Veterans from World War II do remember anti-Jewish occurrences. They also say that the number of them lessened as the war continued. This may be a result of the military's concerted effort to denounce anti-Semitism.<sup>35</sup>

Another possible reason for a minimal number of recollections of anti-Jewish behavior towards those interviewed may be due to the fact that the military life of these people began in late 1941 or later. As more Jews entered the military, fewer people questioned their patriotism and dedication to the United States. Deborah Dash Moore wrote about anti-Jewish attitudes in the days before the United States declared war. She added, however, that even though "...most Jewish soldiers encountered anti-Semitism in the service, many thought that daily living together reduced prejudice."<sup>36</sup>

Entrants in the YIVO contest "...all maintain that living together in the army brought about closer relations and a decline of anti-Semitism. All of them state that the closer they came to the front, the less were the signs of anti-Semitism, and that it disappeared altogether on the battlefields."<sup>37</sup> This conclusion supports Westheider's discussion of racism during the Vietnam War: racism was more prevalent the farther the soldiers were from the front lines. So too, apparently, was the case with anti-Jewish acts during World War II.

One reason for anti-Jewish feelings was because many soldiers and sailors had not had any previous interaction with Jews and had limited contact with



people who differed from their background. In effect, they just did not know any better. However, there are also examples of Gentiles who changed their minds about how they felt toward Jews after getting to know them, a clear indication that education and contact can change attitudes.

One interviewee recollected an incident with one of his best friends in the military. His friend said, "I've got to make a confession to you....When you first reported for duty at the battalion headquarters...and I saw on your record that you were Jewish, I figured well...I'm going to screw you....I was always taught that Jews were no good. You sure as hell didn't fit that mold. You were different than anything I was ever taught. I want to apologize."<sup>38</sup> This recollection exemplifies that relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish personnel were ultimately based on the personalities of the individual soldiers and the need for mutual support.

Even though anti-Jewish incidents did occur, some Jewish veterans reported feeling quite content during their military service and did not remember any anti-Jewish feelings or actions aimed toward them. One veteran even described the military as one big happy family!<sup>39</sup> Another not only did not recall any negative occurrences but, to the contrary, did mention two Gentile friends who became his protectors.<sup>40</sup> In addition, most of those interviewed believed that they, with all the other soldiers, were living in serious conditions that did not allow soldiers to have negative attitudes toward one another.

Jewish individuals often succeeded in being ambassadors of the Jewish people to other soldiers. One interviewee talked about, "...when the Gentile holidays would come, I would volunteer to do whatever I could so that my Gentile friends didn't have to pull duty. So they could enjoy their holiday."<sup>41</sup> Often, Jews did things on a personal level to allow their comrades to celebrate their holidays.

The military tried to ensure the public and its own personnel that it was a safe place for people of all faiths. It also tried to publicize its disapproval of overt acts of an anti-Jewish nature. On an official level, Leland P. Lovette, United States Navy Director of Public Relations, wrote a letter that appeared in a publication called, "The Jewish Veteran." Articulating the navy's official opposition to anti-Semitism he wrote, "An official directive will go to all ships and stations, ordering all commanding officers to pay particular attention that no subject matter is used in service publications that will in any way offend the sensibility of any racial or religious group."<sup>42</sup> Clearly, the military public relations department was aware that anti-Jewish acts had occurred and wanted to publicize the military's determination to combat these trends.

CANRA also formally responded to anti-Semitic occurrences. It wrote to the office of the chief of chaplains in response to anti-Jewish remarks found in military periodicals and newspapers, in the Army and Naval Hymnal, and even the Catholic version of the New Testament distributed to members of the armed forces. The statement, "The Jews are the Synagogue of Satan," was removed from future printings.<sup>43</sup>

Not only did the military and CANRA respond to anti-Jewish actions, but servicemen and their chaplains also believed that the military had a fair system for all involved. One chaplain, Rabbi Joshua Goldberg, stated at a conference in March, 1943 that "...while individuals in the military might have been anti-Semitic, the navy system was fair and reacted appropriately when an issue was raised."<sup>44</sup> Obviously anti-Jewish attitudes existed, but none of the interviewed veterans felt they were systematic and sustained.

### Opportunities for Jews to be Jewish and Stay Attached to their Heritage

In spite of anti-Jewish incidences did Jewish personnel have the opportunity to be Jewish? If Jews wanted a chance to stay attached to their Jewish heritage could they?

One way of maintaining contact with Jewish life in the military during World War II was through the publication of newspapers and pamphlets aimed at Jews. Some chaplains in Germany wrote a Jewish newsletter for their troops. One was entitled, "Forward."<sup>45</sup> Issues included discussion of approaching holidays, other Jewish events taking place within the military and creative articles that tried to make the Jewish soldiers laugh. They helped Jewish troops remain up-to-date on issues of Jewish concern.

CANRA itself published periodicals to enrich Jewish life in the military. *The Jewish Chaplain* contained news items, articles by chaplains and suggestions for program materials. Another, *The Schmoose Sheet*, covered informal personal information such as current news on the movements of Judaism, awards, separations of chaplains (i.e. when chaplains left or separated from one unit and moved to a different unit), advice on civilian employment possibilities and the newest Jewish books.<sup>46</sup>

One veteran mentioned receiving the *Forverts*, a Yiddish daily newspaper, while stateside. It made him feel more comfortable in his military setting. The distributor had given him the subscription for free because he was in the army.<sup>47</sup>

The JWB helped Jewish soldiers to socialize with other members of the Jewish community by sponsoring events for them such as picnics in a park.<sup>48</sup> All those interviewed made lifetime friendships with Jews and non-Jews alike because of all their interactions during the war.

### Prayer and Celebrating Shabbat

How did Jewish soldiers fare in the daily or weekly practice of prayer and celebration of Shabbat? The ability to practice Judaism was erratic. Sometimes Jewish religious practice was absent. Other times, Jews had to go out of their way to practice Judaism. Once in a while religious practice flourished. The interviewees reported that formal and informal prayer opportunities were available in some training centers and behind front lines. One veteran knew a Jewish soldier who recited his daily prayers every morning and night.<sup>49</sup> This soldier wanted to pray and actually did.

One veteran recalled services in Texarkana, but not any overseas.<sup>50</sup> Another commented that there were no services in the Burma jungle, but he did attend services in the states.<sup>51</sup> Still another veteran remembered attending services in Calcutta, India, at "a big beautiful synagogue."<sup>52</sup> As this example shows, when Jewish soldiers were overseas, but away from the war, they sometimes were able to pray at local synagogues.

The military tried to provide opportunities for Jewish communal prayer when it could, but it did not coerce Jewish soldiers to attend. However, one veteran mentioned the mandatory chapel services at West Point. "You either went to the Protestant chapel, Catholic chapel, or the Jewish chapel. Of course I opted for the Jewish chapel. They didn't tell you where you had to go but you had to go to one....We used to moan and groan a little bit because we used to go to chapel before breakfast on Sunday and we had the longest march to breakfast, farther than the Protestant and the Catholics."<sup>53</sup>

In addition to giving Jews an opportunity to pray as a community, CANRA handed out over one million copies of the JWB abridged prayerbook. This gave Jews an opportunity to pray on their own if they so desired.

One veteran talked about how he had intended to pray. "I had brought my *tefilin* with me when I was in the service and somebody stole it while I was in the barracks. I put them on because I thought the Lord would [be upset] if I didn't do what I was supposed to do. It went by the wayside after a couple of weeks."<sup>54</sup> This shows that one could pray if one desired, but that daily prayer could be difficult in this setting.

In addition to reciting daily prayer, Jewish troops also had opportunities to celebrate Shabbat. Some interviewees recalled observing Shabbat when they could. One veteran attended Shabbat services when he was off duty.<sup>55</sup> Another veteran went to services at "a beautiful Sephardic synagogue" in Tunis.<sup>56</sup>

A different veteran attended services at Jefferson Barracks conducted by a local Reform rabbi. He was uncomfortable with the service because it was Reform and he had an Orthodox upbringing.<sup>57</sup> Another interviewee remembered going to services once in London at an Orthodox synagogue. Interestingly, this veteran felt uncomfortable at these services because he came to the military with a Reform upbringing. This same veteran also recalled going to services a few times during primary and basic training.<sup>58</sup>

These examples underscore the fact that people from different Judaic backgrounds populated the military and Jewish military communities had to work together to ensure that diverse religious needs were met.

In the military, it was theoretically possible to celebrate Shabbat, but practically it was difficult for Jewish soldiers to mark Shabbat overseas where

there was not always a Jewish chaplain to conduct services and few people took the initiative to lead services on their own. On the other hand, Jews near a major community were often able to go to a local synagogue when services on their installations were not available. Jews in the Armed Forces could observe Shabbat at times and pray on occasion.

### Celebration of Holidays

Were Jewish soldiers able to celebrate holidays such as *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Hanukkah*? Most of the interviewees remembered observing different holidays, at least minimally.

During training and in wartime situations, it was difficult for soldiers to receive a lot of time off. One veteran recalled being in "...Sioux Falls over the High Holidays, [where] the colonel in charge...said, 'We can either take off *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Kippur*.' Of course you didn't have much of an alternative, so we took off *Yom Kippur*."<sup>59</sup>

Veterans fondly remembered High Holidays celebrated overseas. In some places, a soldier was able to observe Jewish holidays more fully. One interviewee recalled being at a camp in India in the middle of nowhere. "I came into Calcutta and there were services held for Jewish troops. There was a Jewish chaplain and lots of Jewish troops from both the British and American armies. The first evening of *Rosh Hashanah* there was a huge airplane hangar open at both ends. It was used by the army for showing movies and all kinds of entertainment. That was used for services. There must have been over 3000 troops plus some civilians at services. They were fabulous."<sup>60</sup>

Other veterans were happy just to have the opportunity to celebrate holidays. One wrote home sharing his *Rosh Hashanah* with his parents, "I attended services yesterday morning, last night, and this morning."<sup>61</sup> An interviewee celebrated the High Holy Days aboard ship as he traveled overseas and when he was in Shanghai.

Now, going overseas we had High Holy Day services aboard ship....Aboard ship we had 15,000 troops so there were Jewish boys in the other outfits....There was no rabbi there. One of the chaplains performed the service. He had a book and he could read out of it just like a rabbi would....1945, in Shanghai they had made arrangements to get a couple of big hangars out at the airport to have High Holy Day services....I had no idea how many, I couldn't see how far there were people. There were some Chinese people there. I understand there were some Chinese Jews, but I didn't get to talk to them. I was just glad to go to services.<sup>62</sup>

However, sometimes Jewish soldiers had responsibilities that did not allow them to attend services. One described a High Holy Day during which he sat in a C-47, a transport plane, preparing to be sent from Italy to Southern France, "...thinking what the hell am I doing here on *Rosh Hashanah* or was it *Yom Kippur*?"<sup>63</sup>

Fortunately, for those Jewish troops who did not have a rabbi, many non-Jewish chaplains went out of their way to assist Jewish troops. One Protestant chaplain notified Jewish personnel about the approaching High Holy Days and even flew hundreds of miles to borrow a Torah for them.<sup>64</sup>

Periodically non-Jewish chaplains led the services, sometimes even on the High Holy Days. "On *Rosh Hashanah* a Catholic priest told...Jews about the significance of our great feast, and the next morning a Protestant pastor spoke on the contents of the chapter in the Torah that was being read."<sup>65</sup> These incidents demonstrate the support discussed earlier.

The setting of High Holy Day services was often reflective of the war. One soldier in the YIVO contest wrote about his experience and concern.

The service [on *Yom Kippur*] brought a lot of Jewish soldiers together for the first time in many months.... Our headgear were the steel helmets, and every soldier carried his rifle, which he placed between his feet when sitting, and slung to his shoulder when certain prayers required him to stand. At such times there would be an ominous rustling of government-issued hardware throughout the theatre. I hope the good Lord didn't misunderstand our intentions that day. We were only following orders issued by headquarters of the Third United States Army.<sup>66</sup>

Not only were the High Holy Days observed, but so was Passover. One interviewee remembered a Passover service on board a troop ship. "In fact, when I came home from overseas, we boarded a troop ship at Calcutta, the first night of Passover. And a couple of days later, there was a Jewish chaplain on board. He had a kind of a Passover service."<sup>67</sup> Another veteran recalled a celebration of Passover. "Ralph Blumenthal...was the chaplain in that area and he came to Bhamo, Burma, to conduct a *seder* for the Jewish boys in that area."<sup>68</sup>

Other veterans remembered getting assistance from non-Jewish chaplains to help them celebrate Passover. One veteran recalled a *seder* at a restaurant in St. Quentin, France. "On Passover, the *seder* was held at a large two-floor restaurant. The *seder* was watered down, but there was an overflow crowd. The French people must have thought that the whole army was Jewish....I guess the non-Jewish chaplain on our base..." put it on.<sup>69</sup> One veteran recalled how difficult it was to get to a *seder* while in a military hospital, but a non-Jewish chaplain was willing to help and even gave him a ride. He remembered a wonderful homemade meal that made the *seder* more special.<sup>70</sup>

At least one non-Jewish chaplain was proud of the assistance he gave to the Jewish troops. Chaplain Charles Trent wrote to his wife that, "[He] had a conference with one of the Jewish men regarding the Passover to be observed by



them this Friday and Saturday."<sup>71</sup> He wrote again a few days explaining what happened the day of the *seder*. It is evident that chaplains worked with people of all faiths regardless of the chaplain's own faith.

I went to the hospitals. At six o'clock I held a Good Friday service for the men in this area....Then, at seven o'clock I attended the Jewish *Seder* service. I had helped with the arrangements for the service and helped to get the word around, but I had no part in the service, although one of the Jewish leaders had asked me to speak. I was so uncertain in my plans that I declined, and they got another chaplain, Protestant, for the short message. The service was crowded being in a tent too small, used by the Seabees as their library. Some men, not Jewish, wanted to remain in the tent to read -- but mostly to visit and talk, it seemed to me. The service was partly in Yiddish<sup>72</sup>, but mostly English, and consisted of the reading of Psalms, chants, responses, and the partaking of unleavened bread -- *matzos*, and wine. I think the leader, however, got all the wine! The service conducted in a synagogue with quietness and reverence would be very impressive, I believe.<sup>73</sup>

Non-Jewish soldiers also helped Jews celebrate holidays. One veteran described celebrating Passover while in a German prisoner of war camp with the help of non-Jewish troops:

We POWs of the Jewish faith were made aware through the grapevine that the holiday of Passover was upon us and that a service would be held in secrecy in a small building. One evening we assembled under cover and said several prayers, and concluded with a prayer for the dead (*Kaddish*). Volunteer men who were not of the Jewish faith stood guard for us in the event our privacy may be interrupted by the Germans. Our prayers were short and sweet, but most meaningful with many 'Amens.'<sup>74</sup>

There were other cases of Jewish soldiers receiving assistance from supporting organizations. CANRA worked hard to get materials for Passover overseas including wine, *matzos* and other edibles. Packages were even sent to bedridden patients in hospitals. Although a lot of Jewish soldiers received supplies for Passover, not everyone received the necessary items. Supply movements were hindered by the secrecy of military movements. In addition, priority was given to moving fighting men and equipment and there were problems of coordinating the shipping process.<sup>75</sup>

Even with instances in which supplies were not received, celebrating holidays helped Jews feel more comfortable away from home. Non-Jews who assisted and supported Jewish practices allowed them to have this feeling while fighting as United States soldiers and sailors. Jews were clearly able to celebrate holidays. If not all of the time, at least some of the time.

#### Observing Dietary Laws - *Kashrut*

It was not as easy for Jews to observe the laws of *kashrut* or even keep a semblance of Jewish dietary practice.<sup>76</sup> Of those interviewees who kept *kosher* at home, none of them kept *kosher* or even tried to in the military. It was just too difficult. As discussed in Chapter 2, "The JWB tried to help the Jewish soldier keep *kosher* as much as possible when in the states. When abroad, it was much harder to do so. In this situation, it was considered legally justified not to keep *kosher* because the soldier was considered as being under unavoidable interference to act a certain way. Therefore, the *Halakhic* status of the soldier was exempt from fulfilling the specific mitzvah of keeping *kosher*."<sup>77</sup>

CANRA did try to make food available at post exchanges. When that was not successful, local JWB workers stocked *kosher* food products in their offices. CANRA tried to assist conscientious observant Jews as much as it could. The organization even "...recognized the gastronomic attachment of most Jews to *kosher* delicacies. Although this could not be provided in substantial quality to all Jewish personnel the effort was made to ship these articles in limited qualities overseas for *Oneg Shabbat* (Sabbath celebrations) and other special hospitality purposes."<sup>78</sup> Support organizations tried to make Jews as comfortable as possible in the military setting.

### Summary

In the United States military during World War II, Jews could live as Jews. Sometimes they were faced with challenges dealing with anti-Jewish people. There were many incidents of Gentiles harassing Jewish soldiers and sailors because of religion. Yet, there were also many cases of Jew and Gentile working together as American soldiers and even as friends. Non-Jewish chaplains also supported Jewish troops in the religious program. Even military officials expressed dismay over anti-Jewish acts.

At times, Jews were limited in how they could practice their Judaism. Even so, they often kept up their cultural attachment through receiving Jewish newspapers and newsletters. Also, the JWB held events to make Jews more comfortable in the military setting.

Other times Jewish personnel could be observant and actually did celebrate holidays. Veterans told many stories about celebrating the High Holy Days and Passover overseas and in the states. They also talked about the possibilities of prayer, not always realistic, and observing Shabbat, not always possible.

More often than not, though, Jewish troops returned to the states with a stronger sense of Jewish identity as a direct result of their military experience.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on World War II as the good war, see: Adams, Michael C. C. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1994 and Turkel, Studs. *"The Good War": an Oral History of World War Two*. New York: Pantheon Books. 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Millet, Allan R. and Peter Maslowski. *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. New York: The Free Press. 1984. p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> Weinberg, Gerhard L. *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1994. p. 894. In Hess, *The United States at War*, the number of those who died is listed as 325,000. p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Hess, Gary R. *The United States at War, 1941-1945*. Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc. 1986. p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*. p. 473.

<sup>6</sup> Korn, Bertram W. *American Jewry and the Civil War*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society. 1951. p. 119; Jewish War Veterans of the United States. *Jews in the World War; A Study in Jewish Patriotism and Heroism*. New York: Jewish War Veterans of the United States. 1941. p. 4; Moore, Deborah Dash. *When Jews Were GI's; How World War II Changed a Generation and Remade American Jewry*. Ann Arbor, MI: Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, The University of Michigan. 1994. p. 7; Wolf, Simon. *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen*. Philadelphia: The Levytype Company. 1895. p. 424.

<sup>7</sup> Slomovitz, Albert Isaac. *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*. New York: New York University Press. 1999. p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> "United States of America" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 15 (1971): 1633.

<sup>9</sup> Some would make a clear distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish behavior/acts/attitudes. In this thesis no such distinction is made.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, *When Jews Were GI's*. pp. 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Barish, Louis, ed. *Rabbis in Uniform*. New York: Jonathan David. 1962. p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Slomovitz, Albert Isaac. *The Fighting Rabbis: Jewish Military Chaplains and American History*. New York: New York University Press. 1999. p. 75.

<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, Philip S. *Rabbis at War*. Waltham, MA: American Jewish Historical Society. 1971. pp. 7-10.

<sup>14</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. pp. 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis*. p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> Moore, *When Jews Were GI's*. p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Sources in which some study has been done are: Moore, *When Jews Were GI's* and Kligberg, Moses. "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science*. 5(1950). pp. 256-65.

<sup>18</sup> The full texts of the interviews are located in Appendix B.

<sup>19</sup> A copy of the questions is located in Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> What the interviewees understood by *cheder* is unclear. There are different interpretations of *cheder*. Some use the term to denote a supplemental Jewish school that met four or five times a week. Others may be referring to a Jewish day school.

<sup>21</sup> For a more complete experience of Jewish chaplains and their stories, see: Angel, Camillus. Manuscript Collection No. 250. AJA, Barish, *Rabbis*, Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis*, Baum, Rabbi Albert G. Manuscript Collection No. 412. AJA, Fierman, Morton C. Diaries and Scrapbooks. 1944-45. AJA, Klausner, Abraham J. Memoirs as a Chaplain during World War II. Biographies File. AJA, Lipman, Euguen J. Biographies File. Memoirs of World War II. AJA, Nadrich, Judah. Memoirs describing career as chaplain during World War II. 1942-45. Biographies File, AJA, and Weiner, Jennifer Cheryl. "The Role of the Rabbi in the United States Armed Forces." Rabbinical thesis, Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. 1996.

<sup>22</sup> Westheider, James E. *Fighting on Two Fronts; African Americans and the Vietnam War*. New York: New York University Press. 1997. p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> JW, See Appendix B, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup> EF, See Appendix B, p. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Deborah Dash Moore wrote that many Jewish soldiers experienced anti-Semitism when they first entered service but that lessened as the war continued and Jews had more interaction with Gentiles. See Moore, *When Jews Were GI's*. pp. 6-10.

<sup>26</sup> Kraines, Oscar. "Antisemitism in the U.S. Army, 1941-1945: A Memoir." *Midstream; A Monthly Jewish Review* April 1999. pp. 27-28.

<sup>27</sup> Kligberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 258.

<sup>28</sup> Kraines, "Antisemitism," p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Kligberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 258.

<sup>30</sup> Kligberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 259.

<sup>31</sup> Kligberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." pp. 256-65.

<sup>32</sup> YIVO is the principal world organization conducting research in Yiddish. This organization sought to collect and preserve material mirroring Jewish life, rescue Jewish folklore from oblivion and study various Jewish problems scientifically. The essays for this contest were written in English. For more information, see; "YIVO Institute for Jewish Research" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 16 (1971): 837-39.

- <sup>33</sup> "In the Day's Mail." The Jewish War Veterans, T-9 (Folder). Archives, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. 17013. Hereafter as Archives, USAMHI.
- <sup>34</sup> NF. See Appendix B, pp. 93-94, 97.
- <sup>35</sup> Dinnerstein, Leonard. *Anti-Semitism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1994. p. 137.
- <sup>36</sup> Moore, *When Jews Were GI's*. p. 9.
- <sup>37</sup> Kligsberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 258.
- <sup>38</sup> NF. See Appendix B, pp. 91-92.
- <sup>39</sup> HK. See Appendix B, p. 108.
- <sup>40</sup> GL. See Appendix B, p. 103.
- <sup>41</sup> NF. See Appendix B, p. 96.
- <sup>42</sup> "Navy Opposes Anti-Semitism." The Jewish War Veterans, T-9 (Folder). Archives, USAMHI.
- <sup>43</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. pp. 35-38.
- <sup>44</sup> Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis*. p. 86.
- <sup>45</sup> For more information, see: *Forward*. Published in Germany. 3 (9 February 45), 4 (27 February 45), 5 (29 March 1945) and 6 (18 May 1945).
- <sup>46</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. p. 14.
- <sup>47</sup> HP. See Appendix B, p. 137.
- <sup>48</sup> HP. See Appendix B, p. 135.
- <sup>49</sup> EF. See Appendix B, p. 77.
- <sup>50</sup> NF. See Appendix B, p. 96.
- <sup>51</sup> LL. See Appendix B, p. 126.
- <sup>52</sup> HP. See Appendix B, p. 134.
- <sup>53</sup> EW. See Appendix B, p. 157.
- <sup>54</sup> GL. See Appendix B, p. 112.
- <sup>55</sup> HP. See Appendix B, p. 135.
- <sup>56</sup> HK. See Appendix B, p. 104.
- <sup>57</sup> GL. See Appendix B, p. 112.
- <sup>58</sup> JW. See Appendix B, p. 166.
- <sup>59</sup> EF. See Appendix B, p. 75.
- <sup>60</sup> HB. See Appendix B, p. 134.
- <sup>61</sup> Letter from Leo Golden to his parents on Sunday September 13, 1942. 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (Leo Golden) (Folder) 94 Letters by Leo Golden, 1942. Archives, USAMHI.
- <sup>62</sup> LL. See Appendix B, p. 125.
- <sup>63</sup> JW. See Appendix B, p. 164.
- <sup>64</sup> Slomovitz, *The Fighting Rabbis*. p. 85.
- <sup>65</sup> Kligsberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 259.
- <sup>66</sup> Kligsberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism." p. 263.
- <sup>67</sup> HP. See Appendix B, p. 134.
- <sup>68</sup> LL. See Appendix B, p. 116.
- <sup>69</sup> EF. See Appendix B, p. 76.
- <sup>70</sup> Ellis, Harold S. "The Navy and Me." A Memoir from World War II. AJA
- <sup>71</sup> V-Mail on April 4, 1944 from Charles V. Trent to Mrs. Trent. The Charles V. Trent Papers, (Folder). Charles V. Trent, Chaplain 5<sup>th</sup> United States Cavalry Regiment. 1944, Archives, USAMHI.
- <sup>72</sup> Trent willingly and gladly worked with the Jewish troops. Perhaps he did not realize that the other language used in the *seder* was Hebrew, not Yiddish.
- <sup>73</sup> V-Mail on April 8, 1944 from Charles V. Trent to Mrs. Trent. The Charles V. Trent Papers, (Folder). USAMHI.
- <sup>74</sup> Schechter, Irv. "A Winter Nightmare; Stalag IV B." AJA. p. 26.
- <sup>75</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. p. 19.
- <sup>76</sup> For more information on *kashrut* observance, see: Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. pp. 22-23.
- <sup>77</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 22-23.
- <sup>78</sup> Bernstein, *Rabbis at War*. p. 22.

## CONCLUSION

The United States military in a basic sense is an amalgamation that gathers people from divergent backgrounds to fight on behalf of their country. In World War II, as in earlier wars, Jews served in the military as a minority of the population and had to cope with the religious and social challenges they faced. Jews have been involved in America's military as citizen-soldiers and professional soldiers ever since colonial times and the beginning of the Republic. Many Jews were patriots and, of course, many gave their lives fighting for their country. Their participation reflects the general trends and conditions that characterize military history.

The role of the Jew in the military increased as the country and the Jewish population grew. The Civil War was a pivotal point in American Jewish history with significant numbers of Jewish soldiers fighting on both sides of the conflict. Importantly, this was also the first time Jews received official religious support as the first military chaplains were assigned positions.

Organizations to support Jewish troops began in the late 1800's and the early 1900's. The Jewish War Veterans and the Jewish Welfare Board, among their other responsibilities, supported Jewish soldiers' needs. The existence of these organizations continued to illustrate the increasingly significant role of Jews in the military. In time, even non-Jewish organizations and the military itself began looking after the welfare of Jewish soldiers and sailors. It is clear that the Jews fought hard for their country responding to the call to duty, doing their job.

Many stories are told of heroic acts by Jewish soldiers and sailors making it is easy to equate fighting to patriotism. Perhaps President Franklin D. Roosevelt

made one of the greatest tributes to American Jews in response to their wartime service. He once said in an address to the Jewish War Veterans:

The American people need no reminder of the service which those of Jewish faith have rendered our nation. It has been a service with honor and distinction. History reveals that [the Jewish] people have played a great and commendable part in the defense of Americanism during the World War and prior wars, and have contributed much in time of peace toward the development and preservation of the glory and romance of our country and our democratic form of government.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish heroism is only a small part of the overall story of the Jews in the American military. Other important aspects of their experience include *Halakhic* and social issues.

The whole question of whether Jews can join the military of country where they live is itself an interesting *Halakhic* issue. Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman wrote a responsa on this matter in the early twentieth century. He argued that Shabbat laws can be put on hold if one finds oneself in a situation beyond one's control. Ultimately, he believed that Jews should serve in the military of the country in which they reside. Hoffman's argument impacted American Jews because they were fighting for a non-Jewish country. Even though Americans were most likely unaware of this responsa, it still supported fighting for America from a *Halakhic* viewpoint.

Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik built on Hoffman's responsa. He also argued about when and whether Jews were justified in breaking the laws of Shabbat. Specifically, Soloveichik wrote about waging war on Shabbat, saving someone's life on Shabbat and the role of pursuing someone on Shabbat. Although Hoffman and Soloveichik were not specifically addressing the United States military, their arguments can be applied to Jewish American soldiers and sailors fighting in World War II.

Many Jews were concerned about other *Halakhic* issues as they served in the American military. CANRA had a responsa committee that responded to these questions. It considered social issues, the celebration of holidays, and the observation of dietary laws. If Jewish soldiers wanted to observe the dietary laws they could in the states because of CANRA's work, but it was difficult if not impossible to do so overseas. The committee also addressed reading from the Torah at the proper time and reciting the mourner's *Kaddish*, among other issues. Essentially, Jews were able to adapt laws to survive during times of war sometimes setting their practices aside for a temporary period in order to fight as part of the military.

More Jews than ever before served in the American military during World War II. While some of their experiences continued to be reflective of life in the military for all people, many Jewish soldiers clearly dealt with issues that pertained only to them. Anti-Jewish attitudes existed in different forms in this setting and the Jews had to live with this reality. When they did encounter hostility, they responded to it in the best way they knew how.

It is important to keep in mind the role that past generations of Jews played in the United States history, paving the way for Jews of today and the future to be an active part of the military and society at large.

As a result of this active and continual participation of Jews in the United States, the military today has adjusted to making the Jews more welcome. Now, the military stocks *kosher* meals ready to eat and facilitates the observance of Jewish holidays such as allowing soldiers in training time off to attend Friday night Shabbat services. Even when troops were in Somalia, a Moslem country,



American Jewish soldiers were able to celebrate *Hanukkah* and light the *menorah* every night.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis only provides a tentative beginning to the vast historical landscape that awaits future scholars. The translation of the responsa by Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffmann and the ten interviews of World War II veterans are the original part of this work. A great deal more will undoubtedly be written about Jews in the American military during World War II. More work is needed on the experience of Jewish soldiers in all of American history. A number of works have appeared on the role of the Jewish chaplain in the United States military. However, it is the regular soldier and sailor that need attention. The continual role of the Jew in the United States military throughout American history is one of the things that make's this country unique.

Specifically, this thesis shows that continual Jewish involvement has made a significant impact on all Jews who serve after them and civilians as well. In addition, Jewish practice and observance of holidays and traditions were sometimes difficult to carry out, but possible if an individual desired to do so.

The massive infusion of Jews serving during World War II opened a new chapter in the American military. It started the process that institutionalized religious issues for minority groups. It opened the door for the military to provide for specific needs and to facilitate Jewish observance as related to Jewish service starting in World War II.

Just as the war marked a turning point in world history, so too did the experience of the Jews in the military mark a turning point for Jews in terms of involvement and recognition as equal citizens in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Friedman, Lee M. *Jewish Pioneer and Patriots*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1942. Front piece.

<sup>2</sup> Stories taken from the experiences of Major Joseph A. DeWoskin who currently serves on active duty in the United States Army.

## APPENDIX A

The following text is taken from Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffmann's,  
Question 42. pp. 54-56 שו"ת מלמד להועיל.

תשובה זאת כתבתי להראות בעליל שאף עפ"י רינא רש"ס ופוסקים  
אנו מחוייבים לשמור פי מלך וחקי המדינה בארץ אשכנז.

**ש א ל ה :**

בזמן הזה אשר ברוב תושבות היהודים מטעם המלך והמדינה כל איש  
אשר הוא בריא אולם צריך ליכנס אל חיל המלחמה ולמלאות צבאו שם שנה  
שנתיים או שלש שנים, והוא אנוס שם לחלל שבתות וימים טובים, אי מחוייב  
היהודי הירא את דבר ר' והשומר כל מצות התורה לעביר כל מה ראפשר להפטר  
מעבורת העצב, כרי שלא יבא לירי חלול שבת או לא.

**ת ש ו ב ה :**

שאלה נרולה שאלת והיא צריכה עיון רב כרי להשיב עליה על פי רינא  
רש"ס ופוסקים לחור, ולא עפ"י נטיית לבנו לברה, ועל כן אמרתי תחילה לא  
אלך למקום אשר לבי חפץ כי אצא לי ואראה ואעיון על משכנות הרועים  
הם בעלי הש"ס והפוסקים. והם ישיבו אותי דבר את הדרך אשר נלך בה  
ואת המעשה אשר נעשה וזה החלי בס"ד:

גרסינן בפרק קמא דשבת דף י"ט ע"א ת"ר אין מפליגין בספינה פחות  
מג' ימים קודם לשבת במה דברים אמורים לדבר הרשות אבל לדבר מצוה  
שפיר רמי ופוסק עמו ע"מ לשבות ואינו שוכח דברי רבי ואיתא עור שם ת"ר  
אין צריך על עיירות של נכרים פחות מג' ימים קודם לשבת ואם התחילו אין  
מפסיקין וכן היה שמאי אומר ער רדתה אפילו בשבת. ודברי ב' הברייתות  
האלו מפורשים בספרי פ' שופטים פיסקא ר"ג וז"ל שם: ואין צרים על עיר  
תחילה בשבת אלא קודם לשבת ג' ימים ואם הקיפום ואירעה שבת להיות אין  
השבת מפסקת מלחמה. זו אחת מג' דברים שדרש שמאי הזקן אין מפליגין  
את הספינה לים הנדול אלא ג' ימים קודם לשבת כר"א בדרך רחוקה  
אבל בדרך קרובה מפליגים אותה. ע"כ. ואיתא עור שם בפיסקא ר"ד: ער  
רדתה אפילו בשבת ע"כ. וקודם להנ"ל תניא בספרי בפיסקא ר"ג: ימים רבים  
ימים שנים רבים שלשה מכאן אמרו אין צרים על עיר של גוים פחות משלשה  
ימים קודם לשבת ע"כ. ואציגה לפניך ג"כ מה שמצאתי במדרש הנדול  
כ"י מארץ תימן וז"ל שם: ובנית מצור בין בחול בין בשבת מה אני מקיים  
מחלליה מות יומת בשאר כל דבר חוץ ממלחמת רשות או אף במלחמת רשות  
ומה אני מקיים ובנית מצור בשאר כל הימים חוץ מן השבת או אף בשבת  
ת"ל ער רדתה אפילו בשבת דברי ר' יאשיה, רבי אומר זה אחר מן הדברים  
שררש שמאי הזקן אין מפליגין את הספינה בים הנדול אלא קודם לשבת  
שלשה ימים במה דברים אמורים בדרך רחוקה אבל אם היתה דרך קרובה  
אפילו בערב שבת מפליגין אותה, אין צריך על עיר תחילה בשבת אלא קודם  
לשבת שלשה ימים ואם הקיפום ואירעה שבת להיות אין השבת מפסקת מלחמה,  
ע"כ. וע' בספר לקוטי מכילתא שלי דף 22 ער 24 ותראה שהדרש ימים שנים  
רבים שלשה הוא מהתנא רבי רב שכן נמצא ררש זה בספרא גבי זכה, ומאמר  
ר' יאשיה וכו' הוא מהתנא רבי ר' ישמעאל, ואין מקום להאריך.

וכתב הרו"ה בס' המאור דטעמא דאין מפליגין ואין צרין הוא משום רכולהו מקום סכנה הוא וכל שלשה ימים קודם השבת קמי שבתא מקרי ונראה כמתנה לרחות את השבת מפני שאין דבר העומד בפני פקוח נפש וה"ה להפריש במדברות ולכל מקום סכנה שארם עתיד לחלל בו את השבת ע"כ, והביאו הר"ן בהלכות. וכתב הריב"ש בחשוכה סי' י"ג. וי"ח וק"א דמתורת רו"ה למדנו שמוחר לילך כג' ימים הראשונים של שבוע למקום סכנה אע"פ שיודע בוראי שיצטרך לחלל שבת, ולדבר מצוה מותר לילך אפי' בערב שבת ראמרינן בש"ס בר"א כדבר הרשות אבל כדבר מצוה שפיר דמי לדעת הרו"ה והר"ן אפי' במקום שבוראי יצטרך לחלל שבת וכ"כ הרשב"ץ והכל הובא בב"י סי' רמ"ח. ועיין בש"ך י"ד סי' רס"ו ס"ק י"ח דמתיר מילה שלא בזמנה בה' בשבת אף שנראה כמתנה לחלל שבת בשלישי למילה משום דלדבר מצוה שרי אפילו בערב שבת. ואף דמדברי הט"ו סי' רס"ב ס"ק ג' ומדברי המ"א סי' של"א ס"ק ט' היה נראה דאסור ג' ימים קודם לשבת אף במקום מצוה היינו טעמא משום ראפשר למולו ביום אחר ולא יחי' שום חיסור מצוה בזה רבלא"ה אינה בזמנה, אבל פשיטא דאם יתבטל שום מצוה ע"י שמאחרין המעשה דמותר לעשות אפי' בערב שבת אף שיבא ע"י זה לחילול שבת במקום סכנה. חוץ מזה י"ל שהמ"א ס"ל באמת כהש"ך דמותר גם במילה שלא בזמנה משום דבר מצוה אלא דלרוחא דמילתא כתב רבזמן הוה אפילו להרשב"ץ דאסור מילה שלא בזמנה ביום ה' שרי לרדן דאין רוחצין, וכן משמע במחצית השקל שפי' כן דברי המ"א, ומה שרחה האלי' רבה ראי' הש"ך ממפליגין בספינה לדבר מצוה ממה שפסקו שם שצריך להתנות עם הנכרי שישבות כבר הקשה על זה הרב הנאון מו"ה ברוך פרענקעל בהנהגותיו לי"ר סי' רס"ו שדבריו צריכים עיון גדול שהרי לדעת הרו"ה מותר אפי' היכי שהישראל עצמו יבוא לירי חילול שבת וכמ"ש הריב"ש ופוסק עמו לשבות היינו במקום ראפשר.

אמנם בס' רמ"ח ס"ק י"ד הביא המ"א בשם ריב"ל וררבי"ז דאם יודע בוראי שיצטרך לחלל שבת אסור אפילו ביום א' ב' ג', עיי"ש, אך כבר כתב האלי' רבא ס"ק י"ב דאין לזוז מפסק הש"ע והלבוש שהררבי"ז והריב"ל אין להם שום ראיה דביוודע בוראי אסור. וכן משמע מדברי הריב"ש דאף ביוודע בוראי שיבא לירי חילול שבת מותר.

ומעתה נבוא לענייננו הנה אין ספק כי הרא' שלא יבריה עצמו ע"י טעדיקי מן הצבא הוא יותר מדבר מצוה, כי מי שעושה כן גורם ח"ו חילול השם אם יודע הדבר וגורם רעה ליהודים כי שונאי יהודים אומרים שהיהודים אינם עושים את דתי המלכות, ומעתה אם הדין שמי שהולך לצבא ביום א' ב' ג' אינו עושה איסור לרוב הפוסקים אפילו אם ודאי יבוא לירי חילול שבת ע"י אונס, ואם הוא עושה לדבר מצוה כגון להציל נפשות ישראלים או לשאר מצוה מותר אפילו בערב שבת לילך בעצמו אל צבא המלחמה, א"כ ק"ו אם הוא אינו הולך בעצמו רק שנלקח עפ"י דינא דמלכותא שבוראי שאינו מחוייב להכריח עצמו מזה אף שבוראי יבוא לירי חילול שבת, כאשר כי ע"י ההכרחא יכול לגרום כמה מכשולים וא"כ שב ואל תעשה ככאן ודאי עדיף מדבר מצוה.

ועוד אם אנו נאמר דמחוייב להכריח עצמו כדי שלא יבוא לירי חילול שבת, א"כ כל איש ישראל ימצא עצמו מחוייב לעשות כן ובוראי רובם לא ישינו הפעם ויגרום חילול השם גדול ח"ו על הנס. אשר ע"כ הטוב, כי פי מלך שמור, ואולי תמצא חן בעיני השרים ויניחו לך לשמור השבת ותעשה הטוב בעיני אלקים ואדם, כי הבא לטהר מסייעין לו מן השמים. ואם תעשה מעשיך לשם שמים הכל לך ישרמו ושכון בארץ ורעה אמונה ושלום על ישראל.

Translation of the Responsum  
by  
Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffmann

This is the response I wrote to show clearly that even according to the judgment of the Talmud and the sages, we are obligated to obey the words of the king and laws of the country in the land of Eastern Europe (i.e. probably Germany).

שאלה - Question

Today, the majority of responses of the Jews, according to the dictates of the king and the state, every person that is healthy, needs to enter the army to strengthen the war and to fulfill [the quota of] his (i.e. the king's) soldiers there [for] a year, two years, or three years. [Since] he (i.e. the Jew) is compelled there [he is going to] profane Sabbaths and holidays. Is the God fearing Jew, who observes all the *mitzvot* of the Torah, obligated to do all that is possible to exempt himself from military service in order that he does not come to do the act of profaning Shabbat or not?

תשובה - Responses

You have asked a big question and much study is necessary in order to answer it according to the judgment of the Talmud and the *poskim* (i.e. rabbinic authority of *Halakhic* questions) exclusively and not according to our intuition alone.

I decided to begin, but I will not go to wherever I want (i.e. to decide this question according to my personal opinion) rather, [I will] attend the "tents of the shepherds" (Song of Songs 1:8), [who are] the sages of the Talmud, and the

*poskim*. They will respond to me the way that we shall go in [this issue] and the practices we are to follow. This I have begun [to do] with the help of heaven.

We read in chapter one of *Shabbat* page 19: side aleph. "The Rabbis taught [in a *baraita*] one may not embark on a [trip by] ship less than three days before Shabbat. When are these words said? [When one embarks] for an unimportant matter. But, [if one embarks] for a matter pertaining to a *mitzvah*, it is all right [to embark on a trip less than three days before Shabbat] as long as he stipulates with him (i.e. the ship's captain) on condition that [the Gentile] does not sail on Shabbat. Even [if the Gentile] will not refrain on Shabbat, [the Jew may still sail.] These are the words of Rabbi."

There it says further (i.e. a little later in the Talmud), "The rabbis taught [in a *baraita*] one may not lay siege to a Gentile city less than three days before Shabbat. If they began the siege, they do not lift it. So it was Shammai who said [in reference to fighting the war on Shabbat], in regard to the Toraitic command [from Deuteronomy 20:20] to wage war against the enemy, until it is conquered [the war should be continued] even on Shabbat."

So in the words of these two *baraitot* explained in the *Sifre* (i.e. the book) on the Torah Portion of *Shoftim* section 203 [with] these being its words. "We do not begin a siege of a city on Shabbat, but rather three days prior to Shabbat. But if they surrounded them (i.e. the enemy) and Shabbat occurred [during the siege], Shabbat does not interrupt the battle."

This is one of three things that Shammai expounded. "We do not begin a sea voyage less than three days prior to Shabbat. To what extent does this rule apply? To a long distance. But in the case of a short distance, we may begin the voyage." It says further there in section 204, "Until it is conquered even on Shabbat."

Prior to the above, there is a *baraita* in the *Sifre*, section 203. (The explanation begins to play on the Hebrew words יָמִים, *yamim*, and רַבִּים, *rabim*,

from Deuteronomy 20:19.) "*Yamim*" indicates at least two days; "*rabim*" comes to add a third day; from here they (i.e. the ancient rabbis) deduce that we do not lay siege to a Gentile city less than three days prior to Shabbat.

I present before you also what I have found in the *Midrash Hagadol* preserved in a Yemenite manuscript and this is its language there.

"ובנית מצור" - For constructing siege works," (Deuteronomy 20:20). [The *midrash* deduces that] this means either on a weekday or on Shabbat. If so, how do I apply the verse "מחלליה מות יומת" - One who profanes Shabbat shall be put to death," (Exodus 31:14)? It must refer to everything other than an optional war (מלתמת הרשות - a war other than one fought in defense of *Eretz Yisrael*.) But perhaps it (i.e. the verse from Exodus 31:14) applies to even an optional war! In that case, how do I apply the verse "ובנית מצור" [from Deuteronomy 20:20]? It must refer to any day other than Shabbat. Perhaps it applies even to Shabbat! (i.e. The *midrash* can go either way.)

Therefore, Scripture says, "Until it is conquered (עד רדתה)," to include Shabbat [as a day on which a siege may be pursued]. These are the words of Rabbi Yoshaya.

Rebbi says: This is one of the things that Shammai expounded. "We do not begin a sea voyage less than three days prior to Shabbat. To what extent does this rule apply? To a long distance. But in the case of a short distance, we may begin the voyage, even if on the evening of Shabbat, we do not begin a siege of a city on Shabbat, but rather three days prior to Shabbat. But if they surrounded them (i.e. the enemy) and Shabbat occurred [during the siege], Shabbat does not interrupt the battle."

See my book, לקוטי מכילתא, pages 22-24. You will discover that the *midrash* "שנים רבים" שלושה "ימים" ("*Yamim*" indicates at least two days; "*rabim*" adds a third day) is from the *Tanna debei Rav* (a particular Tannaitic

tradition), for it is found in the *Sifra* in the section concerning the זִבְחֵה. The statement of R. Yoshaya is in the *Tanna debei R. Yishmael*. But this is not the place to deal at length with this matter.

R. Zerachiah Halevy wrote in ספר המאור (*Sefer Ham'or*) that the reason that one may not sail and one may not lay siege is because it is a place (i.e. situation) of danger. The three days prior to Shabbat are called "before Shabbat" (i.e. for *Halakhic* purposes). [If one were to begin a voyage or a siege during this three day period] it would appear as though he were stipulating that Shabbat be suspended, on the grounds that nothing is allowed to stand in the way of saving life (i.e. to begin an inherently dangerous activity three days or less before Shabbat practically guarantees that one will have to suspend Shabbat since issues of *pikuach nefesh*, saving lives, are bound to arise on that day).

The same is the case with setting forth on an overland journey in the wilderness or to any dangerous place. One will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat. Here concludes the words of Razah, who is quoted by Rabbenu Nissim [in his commentary to the] *Halakhot* [of Alfasi].

R. Yitzchak b. Sheshet writes in his Responsa, numbers 17,18, and 101 that from the legal theory developed by R. Zerachiah we learn that it is permitted to travel during the first three days of the week to a dangerous place even though one knows with certainty that one will have to profane Shabbat.

For the purposes of a *mitzvah* it is permitted to start the trip even on the day before Shabbat (i.e. Friday). As we read in the Talmud, To what do these words refer? [They refer] to a matter that is optional. But for purposes of a *mitzvah* it is perfectly permissible in the opinion of R. Zerachiah and R. Nissim, even when one will certainly have to profane Shabbat [after having begun the trip the day before].

R. Shimeon b. Tzemach Duran writes likewise. All of this is cited in the *Beit Yosef*, chapter 248 [section Orach Chayim]. See *Siftey Kohen*, *Yore De'ah*, chapter 266, note 18. He permits 'untimely circumcision' (i.e. circumcision that



was delayed beyond a child's eighth day) on Thursday. Even though this looks like a stipulation that one will suspend Shabbat on the third day following the *milah*, on the grounds that for purposes of a *mitzvah* it is permitted to do this even on the day before Shabbat.

Even though from the words of the *Turey Zahav* (i.e. commentary on *Shulchan Arukh*), *Yore De'ah*, chapter 262, note 3, and the words of the *Magen Avraham* (i.e. commentary to *Shulchan Arukh Orach Chayim*), chapter 331, note 9, it appears that it is forbidden to do the circumcision three days before Shabbat even if this is a *mitzvah*. The reason is that it would be possible to circumcise him on another day without any loss to the *mitzvah*, since at any rate the circumcision is not being done at the prescribed time (i.e. the eighth day).

But it is obvious that if any *mitzvah* would be nullified if the act were delayed, it would be permitted to perform that act even on Friday and even though one would be led, by doing it, to desecrate Shabbat in a situation of danger.

Besides this, one can say that the *Magen Avraham* agrees with the *Siftei Kohen* that one can perform even an untimely circumcision [three days before Shabbat] if it is for purposes of a *mitzvah*. He rather wishes to note that nowadays even R. Shimeon b. Tzemach Duran, who forbids untimely circumcision on Thursdays, would permit it, since nowadays we do not wash the wound on the third day after the *milah* [and thus would not necessarily have to heat water and make new bandages, etc.] This is the sense of *Machatzit Hashekel* (commentary to *Shulchan Arukh*, who explains the *Magen Avraham* in this manner.

As for the objection of the Eliyah Rabah (a post-*Shulchan Arukh Halakhic* work) to the proof brought by *Siftei Kohen* concerning sailing [less than three days before Shabbat]...the Eliyah Rabah notes that the *Halakhic* authorities have ruled that one would have to contract with the non-Jewish sailor(s) for the ship not to travel on Shabbat. My teacher, R. Baruch Frankel, has already responded to this

objection in his note to *Yore De'ah*, chapter 266. R. Frankel points out that the words of Eliyah Rabah need to be considered very carefully, since in the opinion of R. Zerachiah Halevy it is permitted to travel [for purposes of a *mitzvah*] even if the Jew will personally desecrate Shabbat, as R. Yitzchak b. Sheshet has written.

As for the need "to contract with the non-Jewish sailor(s) for the ship not to travel on Shabbat," this refers to a situation where it is possible to do so [but it is not necessary to do so; the Jew may travel, even if the Shabbat will inevitably be desecrated as a result].

However, he (i.e. the *Magen Avraham*) cites in chapter 248, note 14, the opinions of R. Yosef ibn Lev (from sixteenth century Turkey) and R. David ibn Zimra (from sixteenth century Egypt) that if one knows for a certainty that he will desecrate Shabbat he should not begin the journey even on Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday. Yet the Eliyah Rabah has already written in note 12 that we do not abandon the ruling of the *Shulchan Arukh* and the *Levush* (another sixteenth century *Halakhic* work) for R. Yosef ibn Lev and R. David ibn Zimra offer no proof for their rulings. It seems as well from the words of R. Yitzchak b. Sheshet that it is permitted to begin the journey even when one knows with certainty that he will desecrate Shabbat.

We now come to our subject that one should not utilize some strategy to evade military service is without question a requirement that is even greater than a "matter of *mitzvah*." Whoever does so (i.e. evading military service) causes, God forbid, a desecration of the divine name (Leviticus 22:32; Ramban, *Hilkot Yesodey Hatorah* 5:1) should his act become known. He also causes harm to the Jews, for the enemies of the Jews claim that the Jews do not observe the laws of the state.

So from this we learn that if the one that goes to the army on Sunday, Monday, [or] Tuesday, he does not do [that which is] forbidden to the majority of the *poskim* even if he will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat by accident.

We learn as well that if he does this for the sake of a *mitzvah* for example to save Jewish lives or for any other *mitzvah*, it is permitted even on Friday for him to go voluntarily to the army (i.e. that is going to war).

If so, then how much more [is this permitted] if he does not go of his own accord but is rather taken (i.e. conscripted) by the state. In such a case, he is certainly not obliged to evade service, even if he will certainly come to desecrate Shabbat as a result. For should he evade service, he will cause any number of serious problems. Therefore, to do nothing (i.e. to take no action but simply to let himself be conscripted) in this situation is an even higher duty than to take action for the sake of a *mitzvah*.

Further if we say that one is obligated to free himself so that he does not come to the desecration of Shabbat, then every Jewish man will find himself obligated to do so. Certainly the majority of them will not succeed, so that they would be desecrating God's name [Heaven forbid] for no good reason.

Therefore, the best course is to obey the command of the king (as it states in Ecclesiastes 8:2). Perhaps you will find favor with the officers and they will permit you to observe Shabbat so that you can do that which is good in the sight of God and mankind alike. For the one who seeks to purify himself receives the assistance of Heaven.

So if you will do your works for God of Heaven everything to you will be complete. So dwell in the land and lead faithfully. Peace be upon Israel.

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

\*Make sure to check dates, names, and locations.

1. Where are you from originally?
2. What kind of upbringing did you have? First generally (siblings, What did your father do for a living) then Jewishly
3. What was your Jewish practice prior to World War II?
4. Give some specific detail of how you lived your Judaism.  
Celebrating Shabbat  
Going to Services  
Celebrating High Holidays  
Celebrating Passover
5. When did you get into the military?
6. Where did you get into the military?
7. How did you get into the military?
8. Why did you get into the military?
9. Where did you serve in the military? (Location and branch)
10. What did you do in the military? (MOS -military occupation specialty)
11. Did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism during the war?
12. If so, how did you practice it? (Give examples)
13. Did you encounter any barriers to your practice of Judaism? (Examples)
14. Did you experience any anti-Semitism during your service? If so, in what ways?

## Eugene Fohlen

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Eugene Fohlen conducted on October 14, 1999 at his residence at 11714 Gable Glen Lane, Cincinnati, Ohio 45249.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

Mr. Fohlen: From Newport, Kentucky.

Frank: What was your upbringing like? First generally.

Mr. Fohlen: We were Orthodox then. We had one *shul* in Newport, which was an Orthodox synagogue. All the Jews were Orthodox, at least they all went to the same *shul*.

Frank: Were you active and involved in the congregation there?

Mr. Fohlen: Well, when I was young, after my mother died at the age of five, I moved in with my grandparents and uncles and aunts. Grandpa and I, when they had services, would go to *shul* on Friday evening, Saturday morning, and *Havdalah* services on Saturday night. They did always manage to have Shabbos services, but they didn't always have the evening services. This happened from the time I was very young until I became a teenager.

Frank: Do you have any siblings?

Mr. Fohlen: No.

Frank: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Fohlen: He was a merchant and had a variety store in Lebanon, Ohio. Later on he opened up a small store in Newport. And again, mostly ready to wear. In his later years he had a small confectionery with groceries and notions.

Frank: So, tell me a little bit about your Jewish practice prior to World War II.

Mr. Fohlen: My Jewish practice. Well, I went to cheder four days a week. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, but Friday, because of the oncoming Shabbos, we didn't have cheder. On Sunday, we'd have Sunday school and we'd have students from HUC come over and teach Sunday school in our Orthodox synagogue. Of course, that was interesting because they went into a lot of different viewpoints and history. Some were quite good. A lot of them went on to become well known rabbis. Don't ask me their names, because it was quite a few years ago. I guess if I heard some of their names, I'd recall. If you went back

and looked at some of the students in the '30's and mention some of their names, I would probably recall some of them.

Frank: So you mentioned celebrating Shabbat by going to services. Did you celebrate Shabbat in the home?

Mr. Fohlen: Yes. Grandma lit the Shabbos candles. On Saturday night my grandfather had *Havdalah* services.

Frank: You mentioned going to services on the High Holidays.

Mr. Fohlen: When I was in grade school, maybe even a little while in high school, always took off for all of the holidays. Not only the high holidays, but also Passover and *Sukkos*. I don't recall, but I probably took off just about all of the holidays. As I grew older, in high school, I wasn't able to take off that many of the second day holidays.

Frank: Then you celebrated Passover.

Mr. Fohlen: Always celebrated Passover.

Frank: You celebrated in the home and kept Passover.

Mr. Fohlen: For Passover we were very strict. In the home, we had all Passover food. Then it was more extensive than it is now. Things that are accepted now weren't even accepted in those days.

Frank: When did you get into the military?

Mr. Fohlen: August of '42. I was in for 38 months. I went in August of '42 and came out October of '45. I was in for 38 months.

Frank: Where did you get into the military?

Mr. Fohlen: Fort Thomas.

Frank: Why?

Mr. Fohlen: Well, there was a war going on and everyone was being drafted. So instead of being drafted, it was just a matter of time, so a lot of people enlisted.

Frank: Where did you serve in the military.

Mr. Fohlen: I started out at Fort Thomas. From there I went to Atlantic City. That was basic training. From there, I was accepted in the radio operator and mechanic programmer (ROM) in the Air Corps. The class was in Sioux Falls, South

Dakota. So I spent a nice winter in Sioux Fall, South Dakota. A nice winter if you like snow. I was stationed in Greenville, South Carolina for a short time then in Tampa and Lakeland, Florida. I was in the service for ten months at that time and I was shipped overseas. We were stationed in Chelmsford, England, which is about 30 miles north of London, for about thirteen months. From there we went to air bases in France. All together, I was there for thirteen months, but we had a break. For two months they moved us up to Maastricht in Holland. Then we came back to France for the final couple of months. By that time the war was dying down. That's add up to 38 months at which time they brought us back home.

Frank: Fort Thomas is in Kentucky?

Mr. Fohlen: Fort Thomas is a few miles from Newport.

Frank: Did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism at all while you were in the military?

Mr. Fohlen: Sure.

Frank: What were your expectations?

Mr. Fohlen: Limited, but occasionally we had Shabbos services. When I was in Sioux Falls over the High Holidays, the colonel in charge who was very benevolent said, "We can either take off on *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Kippur*." Of course you didn't have much of an alternative, so we took *Yom Kippur*. I'll tell you how practicing a Jew I was. We were coming home from *shul* on *Yom Kippur*, three of us walking down the street, and two young ladies had a car and stopped and said, "You boys want a ride?" I said, "Wait a minute. It's *Yom Kippur*." By golly, we didn't get in the car and we walked back to camp. That just shows how I practiced Judaism. But I do remember that we could only celebrate one day. Sioux Falls had both an Orthodox synagogue and a Reform temple. I stopped by both of them and spent time at each. It seems to me I felt more comfortable in the Orthodox synagogue.

Frank: Was it your upbringing?

Mr. Fohlen: I don't think it had anything to do with the upbringing. Maybe the girls were better looking. I don't know why.

Frank: Did you try and keep *kosher* in the military?

Mr. Fohlen: No. I got away from that pretty fast. By the time I got out of high school I sort of drifted away. Up until my late teens I was *kosher*. I never ate anything not *kosher*. Even after that I never ate pork. In the military it was kind of hard to

keep *kosher* especially in that time. Now I guess they make arrangements. By that time I wasn't that big about keeping *kosher*.

Frank: Do you remember any other holiday experience when you were overseas?

Mr. Fohlen: It was *Yom Kippur*. We were stationed in England and we went to a synagogue in the outskirts of London. I remember facing the *bima* and there were steps on both sides leading to narrow balconies where the women sat.

But I do remember this one guy who was there at the *shul*. He was originally from France, a big husky guy. He was in the French military away from home. He was in the French service. He was kidding around. When he was still in Paris he would speak Yiddish to the German soldiers. They thought he was speaking broken German. It didn't bother him. We said, "How did you get out of France?" He just smiled. He wouldn't say. He was a paratrooper. But that was incidental. That was in England.

The next time I remember we were stationed in Saint Quentin, France. For some reason on *Rosh Hashanah*, we all went to Chartres, a city with a famous cathedral. On Passover, the seder was held at a large two-floor restaurant. The seder was watered down, but there was an overflow crowd. The French people must have thought that the whole army was Jewish.

Frank: Who put that on?

Mr. Fohlen: I guess the non-Jewish chaplain on our base.

Frank: Did you have any encounter with a Jewish chaplain?

Mr. Fohlen: I do not remember ever having anything to do with a Jewish chaplain. A lot of these air force outfits were pretty heavy in Jewish troops. Off hand, I can't remember ever meeting a Jewish chaplain.

Frank: It's nice to hear that there were some non-Jewish chaplains helping you out in regards to Passover.

Mr. Fohlen: I might have to back off of that. I'm sure that that was a Jewish chaplain that conducted services, but I don't remember any that were stationed at the base.

Frank: Maybe someone came on.

Mr. Fohlen: He was probably at the regional office. He probably traveled over the whole region. There were maybe a half dozen bases and he probably talked to the commanding officer and suggested a central a location where it could be held because there was an awful big crowd there.



Frank: Do you have any other stories about practicing your Judaism?

Mr. Fohlen: I'm just trying to think.

Frank: Do you remember having Shabbat services?

Mr. Fohlen: We did on occasion. War, especially overseas is pretty disruptive. I do remember these two fellows and they were pretty religious. One of them married in France. She was Jewish you know. That was different in those days. Off hand, I kind of think outside of the high holidays, there were always services available. I don't recall. There may have been at some bases. I do remember another fellow that he was always davening morning and night. I started talking to him and told him he was Jewish. He said, "You're not Jewish." "Yes I am." He had a *siddur* in his hand. He handed me the *siddur* and I had to read from the *siddur* to convince him. But these are little incidental stories that you remember.

The guys I hung out with were mostly Jewish. I remember this one fellow from Florida. He was a cute little guy and we practically converted him. He hung out with us all of the time and he started taking on these stories and he started talking using Jewish words and Jewish foods that we'd talked about. He was sort of a humorous type.

That's about the extent of my experience that I recall at least. There may be incidences here and there. In England, women were involved this time. They lived in suburban London. I don't think it was a holiday but we went to their house for dinner. It may have been Friday night. I'm a little vague on it, but I think we made a *Kiddush*. But those things happen. Generally speaking, there's a war going on and we're moving around a lot. I guess my religion was maintained. I don't know if anybody was really, really religious and had to go in the service, I really don't know how they would carry on the tradition. I was with several different outfits and I don't remember any of them where they consistently carried on Jewish services. Some outfits may have.

Frank: Did you ever encounter any barriers within your practice, within your Judaism or just being Jewish?

Mr. Fohlen: Well, I told you about the time when the colonel said we could take off one day. For some reason something I couldn't do because of orders. No, I don't remember anything.

Frank: Not necessarily orders. Any acts of anti-Semitism that you may have encountered?

Mr. Fohlen: Sure. You always encounter anti-Semitism.

Frank: Are you willing to share any examples?

Mr. Fohlen: A lot of times its talk and a lot of times you just over hear people talking. I never had to fight anybody, but I probably came close. I remember one fellow. This kid came from a German family. He's in the American service so he couldn't be out and out. His family, before the war belonged to the German American Bund. They were leaning very strongly toward Nazism. He claimed Hitler did some good. Same thing you hear today; he built new roads through Germany and one thing or another.

Then there was another fellow who came from a German family. This one guy I knew well, this one I knew from being in the same outfit. He was asked, "Are you uncomfortable being over here fighting against the Germans?" He answered, "Not at all. My parents came from Germany." I don't know if he was born in the United States or may have come over as a kid. He said, "I never spoke German in the house. I don't feel uncomfortable at all." He had a directly different attitude than this other guy. This other guy you could tell was influenced by Nazism through his family. I guess his family thought it was great. This was two incidents in the same outfit that I remember. There wasn't too much out and out anti-Semitism.

Frank: That kind of stuff underneath the surface.

Mr. Fohlen: A guy might say, "I'm not anti-Semitic, but..." You know, that sort of thing.

Frank: How would you compare anti-Semitism that you encountered in the army versus anti-Semitism that you would encounter outside of the army during that period?

Mr. Fohlen: I don't know. I wasn't outside but back in those days there was a lot of inherent anti-Semitism. Much more than there is today.

Frank: Within the military?

Mr. Fohlen: To me, it wasn't any different than civilian life. I don't remember anybody saying let's not hang out with him. He's a Jew. Nothing like that. Jewish guys and non-Jewish guys hung out together. There were Jewish officers in our unit, Jewish enlisted men, mechanics, pilots. I didn't see any extreme anti-Semitism in the service. There may have been.

Frank: I'm finding in my interviews that there's a lot of variety.

Mr. Fohlen: This is a story I heard, but evidently it's a true story. There's a fellow I was working with. He wasn't Jewish, but he told a story of when he was in the military. It may have been after the war. There was an ethnic group, he didn't remember if it was Italian or Polish. But there was one Jewish guy and this ethnic group used to pick on him all of the time. So the Jewish guy said, "I tell you what

I'm going to do. Who's the toughest guy in your outfit?" "Oh. Ed Jones."  
"Come on outside." He took him outside and beat the hell out of him and said,  
"Ok. Who's next?" I don't know, the guy could have been an ex-professional  
boxer. According to this guy's story, he wasn't a Jewish guy bragging. He was a  
gentile and he's telling this story. I don't know how many guys he took on and  
beat. So after that, I guess their attitude towards him changed. They thought he  
was a honcho. So those things happen.

In fact, there was a novel that became a movie. I don't know if I read the novel or  
even saw the movie, but I remember parts of it. It had a story like that about a  
Jewish guy, but in this case he didn't win all the time. He got beat up several  
times. I guess eventually he did win. Those things happen.

Fortunately, I was never challenged.

Frank: Do you have anything else you'd like to share? When you got out of the military,  
where were you discharged?

Mr. Fohlen: It was in Indiana. After that I had to take a bus and I arrived in Cincinnati  
late at night. I caught a cab from Cincinnati to Newport. I rang the doorbell and  
my family answered the door and said, "Are you here?" I guess they were  
surprised to see me. I must have told them that I was going to be discharged, but I  
didn't know exactly when. I had no way of telling them. I guess I could have  
called them, but I didn't want to spend the money. Anyway, that's when I came  
back.

I went back to Newport. My grandmother and grandfather were gone. My dad  
was living there. This was my mother's family, but after he closed his business in  
Lebanon he moved to Newport. We had a big house over in Newport, so he was  
living there. I came back to the house and lived there. Marian came along and  
pulled me out of Newport. I was 26 and innocent, but in less than four years we  
were married.

## Nathan "Nappy" Friedman

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Nathan "Nappy" Friedman conducted on February 26, 2000 at his residence at 14415 Quiet Meadow Court West, Chesterfield, MO 63017-9629.

Frank: Where are you from?

Mr. Friedman: I was born in St. Louis, grew up in St. Louis. Actually lived in St. Louis all my life. My first recollection of being born here was when we lived in downtown St. Louis at 1404 Glasgow, which is strictly in the downtown area. Of course, in 1923 that wasn't really considered way downtown. That was starting to get out just a little bit. I think I was actually born on Biddle Street, but I have no recollection of that house at all. I say house, but it would have been probably a two-story flat where a lot of the family lived. When I say family, I'm talking about aunts and uncles.

My first recollection was 1404 Glasgow. We lived on the first floor. There was another Jewish couple living upstairs. I thought it was a nice size house, when as a child, everything is big. When I saw it later, when I was a little more grown, the rooms were small. There was an outhouse in the back. My parents had actually partitioned off a corner of the kitchen with a door and they put a bathtub in there and a toilet and we had inside plumbing. So we weren't really using the outhouse that was in the backyard. That was closed off. The entire family lived in the kitchen, the dining room, bedroom and the living room. That's basically four rooms. Mother, father, three brothers. My older sister was married. She was living out-of-town. Our youngest sister was born there in the house. Of course, more of the rooms were turned into bedrooms as opposed to dining room and living room. I remember I slept on a bed that was in a niche in the hall. I remember we had an icebox in the kitchen. But in the bathroom, there was a wooden box that was nailed onto the windowsill on the outside. In the wintertime, to save on buying ice, we put things out there in that box. But in the summertime, we put a card in the window and when the iceman came, he would look and see the card in the window and he knew how much ice you wanted. It was strictly by 25 or 50. You ordered 25 pounds or 50 pounds of ice and he would chip it off the block on the wagon (he had a horse pulling it), later on a truck. He would chip it off. He had a burlap sack over his shoulder. He put the ice tongs onto that block of ice, would throw it up on his shoulder, bring it in. He would open up the little door on the icebox and put it in there. The icebox had a pan underneath to catch the melting ice and you had to remember to empty that pan, otherwise it would flood in the kitchen. That was the modern way of living.

In the backyard, we had a shed or a stable. My father originally had a horse and wagon that he used to deliver bread for some of the Jewish bakeries. He would keep the horse out there with the wagon. When the horse died he bought a little truck, a Model T Ford. He learned to drive all by himself. How, I don't know. But he learned to drive that truck. He would deliver his bread in that little truck. In the backyard, my brothers built a playground and there was some sort of a competition. I don't remember who organized it or what, but he built a playground with some swings and a sliding board. If you weren't careful, you'd get a splinter going down that sliding board. He won a Loving Cup. I think he took a second prize for having that backyard playground for children in the area. We lived in that house on Glasgow until my father passed away in 1934.

Frank: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Friedman: To the best of my knowledge, when he first came over from Russia - he and mother came from Russia and they brought one daughter with them - the only child at that time, my sister Billie. The other children were all born here. When he initially started working, he got a job in a junkyard. They didn't call them scrap yards in those days, it was a junkyard. He wasn't a well man. I understand he had tuberculosis. When the weather was severe or bad outside in the wintertime, he couldn't work in the yard. I was told by my older sister later that if he couldn't be out there, if he didn't work because of the weather, he wasn't getting any money - he wasn't getting paid. It was very disturbing to him. But then, he became ill. He went to a sanitarium out here (i.e. outside of the city), which was actually way out in the country in those days, for rest and treatment.

Then he got a job working for some of the Jewish bakeries, delivering bread. That's when he first started with the horse and wagon, and then a little truck. At one time or another, I think he worked for every one of the Jewish bakeries in St. Louis. He would start out very early in the morning. I'm going to say he was going at maybe two or three o'clock in the morning. He would be going to different homes, delivering bread to the house. He had several large wicker baskets in the back of the vehicle and he would have all the bread stuck in there. There was no such thing as individually wrapped breads in those days. He was trying to be very sanitary. I remember, when as a kid, I started going with him, he would always keep his hands clean. He would take the bread and put it into a smaller basket when he'd go into the house. When one of the ladies in the house would start to handle the bread, he would get very upset that she was touching the bread. He wanted to give it to her or "What do you want? You just pick that one up by itself. Don't touch any of the other breads because other people are going to be using that bread." So he was trying to be extremely careful as far as not getting any of the bread soiled or contaminated. He also had a couple of what I'm going

to call commercial accounts, grocery stores that would sell the bread. He would deliver it to them. If they weren't open, they had what I'm going to call a breadbox in front - a heavy wood box with a sloping metal lid on it. It had a padlock on the front of it. He opened the thing up, put their bread and rolls and little cakes and things in there, whatever they were going to use. Then he'd lock it up. When the people came in, they'd open it up and take the bakery goods inside.

I remember he had one customer who had a store, like a little grocery (it was on Easton Avenue, which is now Martin Luther King) next door to a theater, the Criterion Theater. In those days you could go to a movie for a nickel. Sometimes we didn't have the nickel to go. I remember this store was right next to the theater and he had a popcorn machine. In the evening when people would come there, in those days if you went to a movie, you went to a movie that was it - you just sat there and watched a movie. If you wanted popcorn or candy you could buy it at this grocery next to the movie. I'd go with my father on Saturdays because the rest of the week, I was in school, and I'd help my father carry the bread into the grocery store. The first time I came the man at the store said, "Go out and get a big bag, a paper bag." I asked, "What do you want a paper bag for?" He said, "Never mind, just get a paper bag, get a big one." I went and brought it in. He opened it and filled the bag with the popcorn from the night before. That was a wonderful treat! The next time we came he didn't have to tell me to get a bag. I brought my own, the biggest one my father had. Those were things you remember as a child. Those were treats.

Even though we had a bathtub in our house, sometimes we'd go to a public bathhouse on Biddle Street where you could go in, bring your own towel. You could take a shower in there with plenty of hot water. We had hot water at home, but this was a treat. They had a little stall off the shower itself where you could get undressed and then go in, soap up and shower and everything. I remember there were older Jewish men, and I say Jewish because the entire area was, I wouldn't want to call it a ghetto where all the Jewish people lived, but that's where they all lived in that area.

Frank: A Jewish neighborhood.

Mr. Friedman: A Jewish neighborhood. They lived right there in the downtown area of St. Louis. And then, of course, as the people were moving west, there were certain neighborhoods where a lot of Jewish people lived. You always seemed to try to move together. I remember we'd go into this bathhouse and I could hear some of the older Jewish men in there, they'd turn that water real hot. "Oooh Boy! This feels so good! Oy!" Those are the kind of things that stick in your mind. I remember that bathhouse on Biddle Street, right across the street from

Yaffee's Junk Yard - a Jewish fellow owned that junk yard. I didn't realize it at that time, but our family got to know him rather well in everything that was going on in later years.

My father would deliver the bread to the homes and the groceries. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, he had rented a stall down at Soulard Market. He would make all of his deliveries early so that he could be at Soulard Market by six o'clock in the morning. He had a stand there. He had a showcase that he would put his bread in, glass enclosed, and there was storage underneath. He had all his bread and everything in the showcase - cakes, donuts, bagels. I would go there with him on Saturdays.

Soulard Market is built in the shape of an "H" and he had his stand in the enclosed part of the market. In the winter when it was cold, there was no heat in there. It was cold, but it wasn't as cold as being out on the open parts of the "H". Once he'd get everything set up in the stand he would take a wicker basket that was about three feet long and about 18-20 inches wide about a foot or so deep and he would put an assortment of different breads in there and paper bags. Then I would take it over on the other side to the open-air part. And people who had a stand there with a space maybe three to four feet between the stands, they'd let me stand over there with the wicker basket and hawk the stuff and try to catch people going by, "Hey, get your fresh bread here!" You have to remember, I was maybe 8-10 years old. You learn to do a lot of things at that age because this was the money that was coming in to help the family.

My brothers had a newspaper route. Everyday day after school, they were selling newspapers. On Sunday's going to regular customers and selling the newspapers. I would go sometimes with them. It seems like everybody had something to do to try and help bring money in. My father would barter with different people at Soulard Market. I remember on one side there was a fellow who had produce - lettuce, tomatoes, different things of that nature - and on the other side was a fellow that specialized in oranges, grapefruit, apples and bananas. My father would trade with them. He would give them breads and get oranges and apples, all the fruit, and from the other guy, he would get vegetables and we always had food on the table. It was interesting because you talk about the Depression, I can never remember being hungry. I heard of the Depression when I was older, but when I was a kid, I didn't know any better. My father would give me a ball. He didn't buy it. He'd be driving down the street, he'd see a ball laying in the gutter or on the curb, it was a lost ball, he'd pick it up and he'd bring it home. I remember later in life, when I had a bicycle. My brother gave me a used bicycle. Maybe he traded someone something or maybe somebody needed something that they had. When I say something that they had - my brothers

started a used auto parts business in our house on Glasgow Avenue. I don't know what gave them the idea. When I say, gave them the idea - they were in high school. I think my brother Bill was sixteen, seventeen years old and my brother Irv was a couple of years younger. I don't know what prompted them or how they did it, but all of a sudden they found an old junk car. They put it in the backyard. This wasn't a big yard. As I recall, that backyard wasn't as big as the breakfast room and the kitchen here. They had this old junk car in there. They got some automobile batteries and some tires. In front of the house there was a little front yard that was about five feet deep. The whole front of the house if it was twenty feet that was a lot of room. In the morning when we'd open up that big front window, they'd pass the tires out and stack them up in the front yard. Stack the batteries up in the front yard and anything else that people going by might possibly be interested in buying. My father was still doing the bread route and Soulard Market. Their business started to pick up. They moved the business from Glasgow Avenue. They found a little store at 2616 Cass. Don't ask me why I can remember those numbers. It was a little store. They started operating out of there. My father wasn't well. The decision was made that he was going to sell his bread route and stand in Soulard Market. There were always people who wanted to get those stands. He was going to sell this to a man who was going to take the route, the stand and everything. He was in the process of selling it to him. The man was supposed to take over in a couple of weeks. My father was at Soulard Market on a Tuesday or Saturday and he became ill. They rushed him to City Hospital, which was on Lafayette, I think 14<sup>th</sup> and Lafayette. He passed away there. My brother Irv was with him. My father didn't have a truck at that time, but he had a car that they used to pile all the bread up, they would take the back seats out and stack things up in there. I remember my brother put everything in the car and drove home to tell my mother that Daddy had passed away. It was a shame. He worked so hard all his life, and when things looked like they would be able to start getting a little easier for him, he was suddenly gone. That was in 1934. I would have been 11 years old at that time. I was just a little kid. I came home from school and Mother was in the living room, the front room of the house, and she was crying. She said, "Go get Mema," one of the relatives who lived down around 18<sup>th</sup> and Biddle. Glasgow Avenue would have been about 2800 west. She said, "Quick, run get her." I didn't know what was going on and I literally ran to the relatives. I said, "Momma said you should come quick." "What's the matter? What's the matter?" "I don't know. Momma said you should come quick." When somebody comes running and says, "Momma says come quick" they automatically know there's something wrong. So we quickly ran and I mean ran because everyone didn't have a car or telephone in those days. We ran home and my mother told them what had happened and of course the whole family were all there for each other. In those days, families were very close. I don't remember too much of the particulars. I remember the funeral was



handled by Oxenhandler. Their place was on Washington Avenue east of Taylor. Their funeral home was in an old home, nice big home. That's about the only thing I can remember. I really don't remember much of anything about the funeral itself.

After the funeral, I was going to school and my brothers were running the business. Mother would go there and help them. They moved the business from 2616 Cass to 2718 Cass, one block west where they got a little bigger place that had a larger yard. Business was progressing. They were getting into more aspects of the used auto parts business. There was a man who had a little filling station right next door, just west of them. When I say a little filling station, he had a little brick building that all he had in there was a little toilet and just a little place where he could have a wood or I guess coal stove. He had two hand pumps out in front. In order to get the gas, you would pump it to get the gas up into a big glass cylinder on top. Then you put the nozzle to the gas tank. For whatever reason, he closed up. They bought his filling station. Not that they wanted a filling station, they wanted the lot. The filling station had a lot behind it. The business was getting better. They became more knowledgeable. They were starting to be a factor in the used auto parts business, auto salvage business, in the St. Louis area. My mother decided that it was time for us to move. We were going to move from Glasgow. She found a house on Page.

Before we go into that, I remember when we lived on Glasgow there was a Jewish synagogue on Glasgow and Dayton. I remember when my father was living, he couldn't go to synagogue on Saturdays or Friday night because he was working. When you're getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning, it's pretty hard to go to services at night. I remember he used to go to the *shul* as often as possible. During some of the holidays, the kids used to play outside of the *shul* with the nuts in the shell. We would pitch them trying to get up to a certain line or something. I don't remember exactly what it was. The kids weren't always in the synagogue. They were running around outside. I would run in knowing my father would be there. He had the big prayer shawl, a big *tallis*. He would put it up over his head, draped over his shoulders and his arms. When I would come running in from the outside and he would see me. He would point his finger at me with that look on his face and then motion for me to come over. He put his fingers up to his lips to say, "Be quiet." and then he would just envelope me in his *tallis* where I was standing right next to him. He would wrap it around me so that he and I were enveloped together. I still, when I think about it, remember that kind of musty smell on the *tallis*.

Sometime after Dad passed away, my mother told me it was time for me to go to *cheder*. It was time for me to go to *cheder* and start studying for Bar Mitzvah.

My mother told me I had to go. OK. I mean, what did I know? I went the first time. She said, "You go up to the *shul*." I went. I knew where it was. I went down what was to me, a kid, a long hall. It really wasn't that long. There was a room at the end with little school desks, the old school desk where you would slide in the seat with a tablet in front of you. I was sitting there with my hands folded in front of me. I don't know what the kid in front of me did, but the *shammas* or the teacher came up behind him and he had a stick and whack. That stick came down on the top of this desk. As I said, I didn't know what the kid did, he didn't hit the kid, but he sure made a hell of a lot of noise with that stick. I jumped up and I didn't stop running until I got home. My mother could never get me to go back. No matter how hard she tried she could never get me to go back to that *shul*. As a result, I was never *Bar Mitzvahed*.

With all due respect to mother, she was working trying to help my brothers at the store. She didn't physically carry or move things or anything like that. A lot of that stuff was heavy iron. She kept an eye on things if somebody came in - "Wait just a minute I will get one of my boys to help you," just to watch things. And to keep the house to watch and make sure that everything was OK. To make sure that her children were eating properly. That was a big thing with mother. In those days, there wasn't any such thing as junk food. You didn't have McDonalds. To make sure that you had a good meal every morning before you went to school. A good meal as far as Mother was concerned was an orange or a grapefruit, some hot cereal, a cup of cocoa, a piece of toast. We didn't have toasters, but Daddy would always bring bread home, she would slice the bread and she had a gas stove and started the burner and would put the slice of bread on the fork and hold the slice of bread over the flame of the burner. That was the first toaster. The second was a pyramid shaped piece of metal with holes on all four sides with a flat top. It had little pieces coming out of the bottom where you could put a slice of bread on the sides. You put that on the stove, light the stove, and the flame would come up, you'd watch it carefully and then when you thought it looked like it should be toasted on one side, then you'd get a fork and you'd turn it over on the other side. That was before pop-up toasters. It was good. That's how we used to make toast. You always had to have a full breakfast. You couldn't just have a glass of orange juice and a piece of bread and that was it. When I say glass of orange juice, if you wanted orange juice, you'd take an orange, cut it in half, and you'd squeeze it on a juicer where you would actually put the half orange on there and twist it. That would get the juice out of the pulp. In fact, we still have one in the pantry here. She always insisted that we have a good meal.

Frank: As you were growing up, I know that you ended up not going back to *cheder*, how did you practice Judaism in your home with your family?

Mr. Friedman: Mother did not keep a *kosher* house. I think it was more because the cost of food. If my father could barter with someone and get a ham for bread, we had ham. That's what he could put on the table. I'm going to use one of Rabbi Brickner's (a former assistant rabbi at United Hebrew Congregation in St. Louis, MO) phrases....He was a religious person in that he lived his Judaism. He was always very honorable in all of his dealings. As I remember my father, I only remember one time seeing him get mad. He was always a very quiet individual. Always very honorable, always treated people with respect. I don't think he ever cheated a person in his life. He tried to practice his religion as much as he could. Mother tried also, but trying to raise children by herself became quite a challenge. She kept a very close relationship with the rest of the family - aunts, uncles.

I remember my Uncle Seltzer. He was a very pious orthodox individual. He really practiced his Judaism. He strictly kept a *kosher* house even after his wife was gone. It was strictly by the book. So much so, that when Orthodox Rabbis would come from out-of-town to St. Louis for whatever reason, they would always stay with Mottle Seltzer because they knew that his house was strictly *kosher*. He really lived his Judaism. When the crash came, my uncle was, I won't say wealthy, but he was financially in good shape. He was dealing in real estate and other ventures. He had people that invested with him. When the crash came, he lost everything. He took some of his investors down with him. It was gone. When he started getting on his feet a little bit, he started to repay every one of the people that had any money invested with him. Nobody ever lost a dime with Mottle Seltzer. He paid them all off.

Prior to the High Holy Days a lot of people go to the cemeteries and say a prayer at the grave of the departed. There were people at the cemeteries that were "hustling clients." While they were saying a prayer at one grave, they were telling others, "Don't go away. I'll be right with you." They were hustling people. I would never get one of these hustlers when I went out there, I would always find my uncle, Mottle Seltzer. At that time, he was living in the Jewish old folk's home on East Grand and Blair. He would come out to the Jewish cemetery, the one that's on Hanley and Olive. For him to get out there, he would take a bus or streetcar from East Grand and Blair. He would transfer three times to get to Hanley and Olive. And then he'd have to walk a little bit. He would start to say prayers for people. I venture to say that he knew a lot of people who were buried there. When he'd say a prayer, the tears would be rolling from his eyes because he would become so emotional. At that time I was married and Jean and I lived on Delmar in U. City and I'd tell him, "Come to our house. My wife keeps a *kosher* house and you'll get something to eat." "No," he said. "I'm too busy. If you'll bring me a grapefruit." He could peel the grapefruit and he didn't have to worry.

"Everything's fine." I remember also that everybody would give him a dollar for saying a prayer. He'd say, "Take my hand." He'd start to shove it in his pocket. You couldn't get your hand into his pocket. He'd have it stuffed with dollar bills that he collected for saying prayers. But, he did not keep a dime of that for himself. All that money he collected from being at the cemetery all day, he donated to the synagogue, donated to charities. He paid his own way to and from the cemetery. That's the kind of family background that was there.

Frank: Growing up, did you celebrate Shabbat at all? Or did you celebrate the High Holidays or Passover?

Mr. Friedman: Yes. There were times when Mother would light candles. When you talk about Passover, I told you about the wooden icebox with brass hinges and handles on the doors. My job was to polish the hardware on the icebox. Mother didn't change the dishes, but everything came out of the pantries. Everything was cleaned. She cleaned special for Passover. She didn't have bread in the house. She always had *matzah*. The Jewish bakeries didn't bake the bread. My father went to synagogue. We were observing the holidays. I know *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* we always were at those services. My mother tried to be as observant as she could and do what was proper. She was always trying to teach the children to do the proper thing.

Frank: To live Jewishly?

Mr. Friedman: That's right. I had no particular desire to keep a *kosher* house. Jean was raised in a family in which her mother did keep a *kosher* house. So she wanted to keep a *kosher* house. "Why do we have keep a *kosher* house?" I asked. *Milchichs* and *fleshichs* and stuff like that. I had a cousin, Jake Seltzer. He was quite a person. Jake was Mottle Seltzer's son. We were talking one time and I told him, "You know I don't want to keep *kosher*. We never kept *kosher* in our house." He said, "You get up in the morning and you leave the house, right?" I said, "That's right." "You work and then you come home at night. She's home all the time. You're not home all the time. So to keep peace and quiet in the house, you should have a *kosher* house." I figured well, maybe he's got something there. So we have a *kosher* house. That's what Jean likes, that's what she wants, she's comfortable with it, that's what we have.

Frank: Moving ahead a little bit to some of your experiences in the military. When did you get into the military?

Mr. Friedman: I received my draft notice in January 1943. I wasn't what you would call the "Red-blooded American Boy" that couldn't wait to go into the army. In fact, I

was working at the small arms plant on Goodfellow Avenue where they manufactured ammunition. I thought this was a vital industry and I would be deferred. When I went to a hearing at the Draft Board, the chairman asked, "How much do you make an hour?" When I told him, he said, "That won't get you a deferment, you're a nickel shy." He told me being in the army would be a wonderful experience, an educational experience, something I would remember the rest of my life. He didn't know how true that would be.

I was inducted at Jefferson Barracks on January 21, 1943. They sent us home the same day and told us to report back to our Draft Board on Delmar just east of Hamilton in a few days. I thought they were going to take us back to Jefferson Barracks. When I got to the Draft Board they put us on a bus, took us to Union Station and shipped us to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I entered into actual service on January 28, 1943 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I received my series of shots, clothing and equipment and started basic training.

After a short time I was transferred to Fort Hood, which was on the outskirts of the small town of Killeen, Texas. I was assigned to a tank destroyer battalion and one of the first things they told us was, "This is a rough and tough outfit. You can expect to see a lot of action." I remember when I sent letters home I didn't want to tell the family, especially my mother, that I was in a tank destroyer battalion so I put TD Battalion on the return address. When mother asked what the TD was I told her "Truck Drivers." She never did find out it really meant. When we were issued our steel helmets and weapons the first thing many of the guys did was have their picture taken to send to the folks back home. When they told me to pose I said, "No thanks. I don't want my mother to have a heart attack." She never saw a picture of me with a steel helmet or a gun.

The training became very intense at this time. We would start out very early every morning marching quite a distance to the obstacle course. At the course we would scale a ten to twelve foot wall, go over the top and land on your feet on the other side, climb up ropes and then drop to the ground and crawl on the ground under barbed wire. Often this was done while someone was firing a machine gun with live ammo over your head. I remember we were going out to fire, we had a half-track, pulling a three-inch cannon behind us. We were firing for record. They would give you a signal and you'd go racing down a road, by an open field. When you hit a certain point, you have to stop. Everybody jumps out of the half-track, not going out the door, but over the side, unhook the cannon, turn it around, get in position and fire off your first round. They would time you to see how fast you could get it in action. You had three times to do it. The first time we did it we got it all set and fired and everything was fine. The second time, we raced out there and started to jump over the side, and, I don't know what happened, but my foot

tangled with one of my buddies' feet and instead of going to land feet first, I'm starting to go head first. The side of the half-track is maybe 8-9 feet off the ground. I'm starting to go headfirst and I grab at the steel plate on the side and end up skinning the whole palm of my hand. We were on the ground, we got the round in the cannon fired off. The officer in charge said, "You better go up to the first aid tent and have them fix your hand." I ran up there and they put some sulfa powder or something on it, bandaged it and said, "We're going to send you back to the base to the hospital." I said, "No. I can't go." "What do you mean you can't go?" "We're firing for record. I'm part of the crew. I've got to be back there to do my share, to be there with them." That's the way I felt and that's what I did. I went back and we fired off that round then I went back to the base hospital.

When you are getting training in an outfit like a tank destroyer battalion where you're very close with your fellow soldiers, the men in your outfit. You are working with them, training with them and you establish a certain camaraderie that you say, "Hey, this is my buddy, I'm here for him, he's here for me and I would not stop to think about what if, but if he needs me, I'm there for him."

I reached the point where I started to question my ability to support my part of our team. Jumping off those walls played hell with the arches in my feet. When we were on the long marches at night I was afraid to stop when they took a break. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to get up again so I kept walking and they would catch up with me. I was really having a problem. Would I be able to support the rest of my team? I finally reached the point where I thought about trying to get transferred to the Air Corps. The Air Corps doesn't march that much. I went on sick call and explained my problem to the doctor and my thoughts about the Air Corps. He said, "Private, you're not going to the Air Corps. Your arches are messed up so we're going to transfer you to limited service." I'll never forget that officer's name, Dr. Goldberg. At that time I didn't know it, but I think that captain probably saved my life. They had told us the life expectancy of a tank destroyer soldier in action could be figured in minutes.

I was reassigned to the Headquarters Company of Fort Hood and assigned to duty in the Post Headquarters. Shortly thereafter, I was put in charge of the post file department. I met a couple of Jewish boys from the East Coast and we became very close. When the High Holy Days came, we thought it would be nice to go to a service in Fort Worth. They wanted to go to an Orthodox Synagogue. I felt I would be more comfortable at a Reform service because I could understand what was going on. But they wanted to go Orthodox so we went Orthodox. We found out where the synagogue was. We were greeted by someone when we came in and sat through the service.

At the end of the service, this little fellow came over, very nice gentleman, he greeted us and he said he would like to invite us to come home with him. He put us in his car and we drove out to his house. I will never forget, as we drove up to the front of the house, we get out and he said, "I'll be with you - just go up to the door." We go up to the door. The door opens - Here's this gorgeous red-head. I'm thinking to myself: "Has he got a gorgeous kitchen mechanic." Then all of a sudden, "*Good Yontif*, you all." When she said *Good Yontif*, I figured this can't be the kitchen mechanic. It turned out that was his wife. A beautiful woman. They were the nicest people you would ever want to meet. They invited us to stay with them, we ate with them, and we met some of their relatives who came over. It's funny because the three of us were strictly enlisted men. One of the relatives had a daughter. We were very friendly with her. She was very friendly with us. Then a lieutenant came to visit one time and all of a sudden the mother was pushing the daughter to the officer. They were very lovely people. We saw them several times when we could come into town. They were just nice people trying to make a place for Jewish soldiers to come and be among the Jewish people. We had a very nice experience there.

Frank: Where else did you serve?

Mr. Friedman: After some time I was transferred to an ordnance battalion which was located in Texarkana, Texas. I reported to the battalion headquarters. A sergeant took my records and go everything together. He seemed like a very nice guy. I later learned his name was Elvie. He was in the headquarters company and I was put in the same company because I had typing skills. Eventually, I was put in charge of the battalion message center. Elvie and I were quartered in the same barracks, worked in the same office and as a result became very friendly.

Our battalion received notice that we were going to be shipped overseas shortly and according to regulations, if you hadn't had a furlough within a certain period of time you could not be shipped overseas. As a result, it was arranged for me to go home on furlough for a week. Elvie had his furlough and could only get a three-day pass. This would not allow him enough time to go back to New York so he was trying to make arrangements to meet his parents and his girlfriend in St. Louis. I told Elvie to give me all the information regarding their schedules and I'll have my brothers "pull some strings and make some reservations for all of you at a downtown hotel." During the war getting hotel reservations was tough. I met Elvie's parents and girlfriend at the railroad station, took them to the hotel and got them all settled with whatever they needed. Elvie came in to St. Louis as I was leaving to return to camp. My family went out of their way to help them get settled and comfortable so they could all have a memorable weekend together.

Later, after this was over, Elvie and I were showering and he said, "Nap, I've got to make a confession to you." "What's that, Elvie?" He said, "You know when you first reported for duty at the battalion headquarters that day and I saw on your record that you were Jewish, I figured well...I'm going to screw you." I asked, "Why, Elvie? You didn't know me, I didn't know you. Why would you want to screw me?" He said, "I was always taught that Jews were no good. You sure as hell didn't fit that mold. You were different than anything I was ever taught. I want to apologize." That was the first time I ever heard anything like that.

Shortly afterward we were told we were shipping out. We were sent to Hawaii. It was a wonderful few months. Hawaii is beautiful.

There was a lieutenant in the outfit. Being in charge of the battalion message center, I had a vehicle at my disposal. I used to come from the enlisted men quarters to the officers' quarters. They had a house that they all lived in. Pick up the officers and bring them up to the headquarters building and then run errands for them. I remember this one time I was driving this lieutenant back to his quarters. He had a correspondence course book laying on the seat. They called it a Yousofy course. I said, "What are you studying, Lieutenant." He said, "I'm studying psychology, Friedman. You know what psychology is don't you?" Before I could answer, he said, "That's when I can screw you and you don't know I'm doing it." And being the smartass that I was, I said, "Lieutenant, you may be able to screw me, but I'll sure as hell know you're doing it."

In fact, some time after that, and we were still in Hawaii to get our advanced training. They call it jungle training - how to survive in the jungle, living on the land, so to speak. We were firing for record. I was with the rest of our group and we were firing. I was pretty good with the carbine. Some of the others - the heavier guns I didn't like, they had a kick. The carbine didn't kick and I was very accurate with it. On the range, I had my gun sights adjusted just right and was just laying those rounds in and hitting that bulls eye. This lieutenant was standing behind me. He was lazy. He didn't want to clean his gun. He had a carbine issued to him. He said, "Friedman, you got that thing set pretty good. You mind if I borrow it so I don't have to clean mine when I have to fire?" I said, "Lieutenant, we don't know where we're going when we leave here. Don't you think you ought to know what you can do with your weapon when you really do need it?" He didn't say a word. He just walked away.

When we left Hawaii, we went to Okinawa. We went on a regular troop ship. We were very fortunate when we pulled into Naha Harbor. As we were pulling in, we could see some naval cutters and different vessels leaving the harbor. They were



really tore up. We found out later, the previous day, Japanese kamikaze pilots had really played hell with that harbor and a lot of the vessels there. We came in and there weren't any docks that you could pull up to and just walk down the gangplank. The landing craft would come up to the side of the ship. The harbor master would go over the side. We'd climb down those nets into the landing craft. We didn't know what was waiting for us. The island was declared secure which actually means no organized resistance. Watch out for snipers, but no organized resistance. The officers came up on deck and on the landing craft to go on shore. They weren't wearing their insignias because they didn't want to be the targets. I don't blame them. We went over the side and the landing craft went ashore. Trucks took us to our camp site. The next day, they bombed the hell out of the harbor again. We didn't know it at the time, we found out later. We were really very fortunate. When we came ashore, Naha had been leveled because the navy with their big guns just off shore had just shelled it. It was like a tornado had come through and leveled everything. There was what I call the smell of death in that area.

We went to our area and set up campsites where our battalion was going to be operating. What they actually were doing was repairing motor vehicles. Our battalion was the local "Detroit" - repairing trucks and amphibious trucks - trucks that could go on land or water. We stayed in this one area for a period of time.

Then we were supposed to move down to what they called the south tip of the island. We were supposed to relocate. Late afternoon, the battalion commander, the colonel said, "Lieutenant (the same lieutenant I was talking about earlier) the major is down at the south point. I want you to go down there and tell him that the battalion will be moving out in the morning. We will be moving out early. He should be prepared to receive the battalion." It was late afternoon. To go down to the southern end of the island, you were going through back roads and mountain passes. You don't have street lights and things like that down there. It was getting dark. You were going down and coming back that evening or that night. So you are going down when it's still fairly light, coming back at night when it's dark. As I said, there were still snipers around and still groups of Japanese that were holed up in different areas. This lieutenant said, "Well Colonel. You know it will be getting dark shortly. Couldn't I just go real early in the morning?" "No, Lieutenant," he said, "I want you to go tonight. Maybe you can get somebody to go with you." One of the company commanders was there, a captain. Everybody liked him. The captain said, "Bill, I'll go with you." Then he turned to the battalion sergeant major and said, "Nick, how about you. You want to take a ride?" Nick said, "Sure, I'll go." He turned to me and said, "How about you, Friedman?" Even though he was not my company commander, I would always see him because I ran the message center and he would be coming to me, or some

of his people would be coming to me to get their material. "Yeh, there's not a good movie tonight. I'll be able to get an early dinner. Sure, why not?" Three enlisted men, we leave to go get our helmets, our weapons and grab a real quick bite and come back there, get in the jeep. The captain is driving, the lieutenant is sitting in front and the three enlisted men are sitting in the back. When we could look out we would see the hulk of a tank or a hulk of a half-track that had been shot up and was laying there and just rusting. We were driving along and the lieutenant says, "Friedman, if Japs start shooting at us, you think you know what to do?" I said, "Lieutenant...." (I wouldn't have said this state side, but over in Okinawa, there's a little different relationship. Here these were buddies. Here was a captain, a prince of a fellow...Hey. Can you help me out? He didn't say that, but that was it. You don't stop to think about the consequences. Sure! I'll go.) I said, "Lieutenant, if the Japs start shooting at us, you just keep your ass out of the way so we can do what we have to do." Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the captain break into a big grin. He didn't say a word, but had a big smile on his face. The two guys sitting next to me didn't say anything, but they could hardly keep from laughing out loud. We did go down, we delivered the information to the major, turned around and started back.

This same sergeant major - as a group, we were marching somewhere and people have a way of kind of kidding and joking. There were a lot of guys from the East Coast, from New York. One of them said something about running the Jews out of New York or something and this sergeant major said, "If they run the Jews out of New York, all the Irish would follow right behind them."

There's a closeness that is hard to describe. You are close, you're there for them as they are there for you. It's hard to describe. I saw the movie "Forrest Gump" where they were under attack and some of the people in his platoon or outfit were injured. And he ran back and he scooped up one of them, came running back with him and got him back safely and then he'd run back and get another. And the captain would tell him, "No, leave me, leave me." "I'm not going to leave you here." And he just scoops him up. I knew exactly where he was coming from.

Please understand when I say this. I am the first to admit in saying I was very fortunate, I did not at any time when I was in the army, the entire 38 months, I did not at any time have to fire at anybody, try to shoot anyone or kill anyone. I was close enough and I could hear the bombs and things like that. I was close enough to appreciate what those poor guys were doing and had to do and what they were going through. I was close enough that they told us, there were gullies or ravines throughout the areas that we were at on Okinawa - don't ever be in those gullies or ravines at night. Because Marine patrols come through. They don't ask questions. If somebody's in there, they shoot first and then they ask

questions.

I said the island was secure. We had our tents set up on a little flat level and there was a little mound right next to it. I'd prop up my foot on the mound and I'm washing up a little bit, all of a sudden, the ground gives way and my foot goes down in a hole. We were camped over a Japanese tunnel. One night while we were there, we were sleeping and I woke up. Elvie was in his cot. There were six of us in that tent on cots. I heard something and I asked, "Who's there?" Elvie had a pistol in his hand. As it turned out, a Jap had come through and Elvie heard him. But by the time he heard him and he heard us, he left right away. We actually went out and reconnoitered all around. I'd hate to think what would have happened if we had seen one there.

Frank: Was the last place you served in Okinawa?

Mr. Friedman: Okinawa was the last place. The war was over. Some POW's were coming back from Japan. We saw some of them when they came into the areas where we were in Okinawa. They really looked bad.

We went home on a point system. You received a certain number of points for service and you got extra points from where you were, etc. When I had my points I was released from being in this battalion and put into a distribution center waiting for a boat. Then the boat came that I was going to be going back on. The boat going home. The first thing, when we landed in Seattle, the little ladies from the Red Cross were there to greet us. They didn't see us coming off the boat. They were down on the dock when we were all off the boat. They asked, "Where are you boys going now?" They thought we were going to go on the boat and go over. We said, "No ma'am. We're not going overseas. We just got back." That was our last place of duty, Okinawa.

From Seattle I came back to Jefferson Barracks and then I was discharged. To show you the closeness, some of the guys I came back with were sent back to Jefferson Barracks also. They were going to different places from there. When I got to Jefferson Barracks, I immediately called home and my family came down. They came through the gate of Jefferson Barracks and I was walking down the road with these two friends of mine. I saw my brother and my mother in the car. They stopped the car. I started to go to them, but then thought, "My buddies are here." They said, "Go on. Your family's right there." That's ingrained in you. That feeling is ingrained in you. Some of these guys, I spent better than a year with. Some of these guys maybe two years or better. When you take 38 months out of your life, under these circumstances, you get a very close attachment. That guy from the draft board said it's going to be a wonderful experience. He was

right if you come out without having your head blown off, it makes you have a different perspective of life and an appreciation for what you have.

Frank: You shared some stories of when you were in training down in Texas of some experiences that you had practicing Judaism. You told a story or two when you were in Okinawa and Hawaii about someone saying some anti-Jewish comments. Do you recall any experiences or do you remember any Jewish Chaplain when you were in Okinawa or trying to practice Judaism at all?

Mr. Friedman: I really do not remember. There may have been a service that you could attend. I'll tell you the truth, I really don't remember. I remember when the Gentile holidays would come, I would volunteer to do whatever I could so that my Gentile friends didn't have to pull duty. So they could enjoy their holiday. More of the religious experience in the army I think as I recall was more stateside. I don't recall that much from Hawaii or Okinawa. There may have been a service or two. I wish I could be more explicit.

Frank: You recalled the one experience of anti-Jewish behavior. From what I gather from your story, to make sure I'm right, for the most part, the fact that you were in the military together and the fact you were really dependant upon one another to help each other out in the time of need, perhaps save someone else's life, that it really didn't matter what religion you were; what your background was.

Mr. Friedman: For the most part, that was true. When you become close with these individuals and you train with them. Of course you have some guys who were real bastards no matter what, they were strictly no good. There were other guys who were very nice individuals. There were a number of Jewish fellows that were in our outfit. A fellow named Sadowsky from up east. I don't remember what he did in civilian life. He tried to observe his Judaism. Whenever a Jewish holiday would come up, we would try to get a pass to get off duty and attend services. Sadowsky was a very nice guy. I remember I was going home on a pass. I asked him, "Can I bring anything back?" He said, "Yeah, if you would. Since I've been in the army, I haven't had a good piece of herring, regular herring." I said, "You got it and a good bottle of Jewish wine." He said, "You know that wine they have here, that's dry stuff. A good *kosher* bottle of wine." I went to Kopperman's on 11<sup>th</sup> and Franklin, Kopperman's delicatessen, *kosher* style, corned beef and all that good stuff. He took the whole fish and wrapped it up in newspaper. People were kind of looking at me when I was taking the train back to Texas. I had this herring in the pack and the bottle of wine. When I got back, he said, "Oh! That's so good."

The family sent a big three-foot wurst when I was stationed in Texas. I received

the package and I think, "What in the hell have I got here?" Then I unwrapped it and Ohhhhhh! I got some bread from the kitchen and took it all to my file and record room at Post Headquarters. Two Jewish boys from New York who were working with me helped slice this big salami and make some sandwiches. The aroma filled the air in this little room. The Post Sergeant Major came walking by, stopped at the door and said, "What the hell is going on in here?" "Come on in, Sarge." And gave him a sandwich. He was happy.

When you were working and living with a lot of these guys and you build up a good relationship with them, then its just like with Elvie where he said, "I was wrong, but this is the way I was taught." For lack of a better expression, they don't know any better until, and not that I'm such a great guy or anything, they meet someone that dispels everything they were taught that Jew are no good.

Frank: So that's through personal experience.

Mr. Friedman: That's basically it. I can't say that other then those few instances, and some of them I didn't even recognize as anything anti-Semitic. Maybe that's a little bit better description. I didn't recognize any anti-Semitism.

Frank: In one or two sentences, how would to characterize your overall experience in the military?

Mr. Friedman: It was an experience. I was very, very fortunate in that I was able to see and do a lot of things that I did and did not have to go through what a lot of these unfortunate people did. We were in areas in Okinawa where we saw what the natives had to go through, how they had to live. I feel that I was blessed. Someone was looking over me. As I said, I never looked on myself as a religious person. True, today, I count my blessing.

Jean and I try to go to services every Friday night or as often as we possibly can. I think there is someone looking over you, looking after you. I'll tell you a perfect example, when Jean's organization Na'amat, had one of their international conventions in Israel. I had never wanted to go to Israel. When they talked to me about going to Israel, I said no. They said, "Why don't you want to go?" I said, "My uncle, Uncle Sam, taught me that if you don't have to go where people are throwing things at each other and shooting at each other, don't go. I just don't feel comfortable about going." When they were going to have the convention and she was so very active in the organization, I didn't have the heart to say no, I don't want to go. So we went. The very first night we got there, the people in charge, the people in Israel, after dinner took us to the old city by the Wall. They were explaining things to us, talking to us about all the different things there. Then

afterwards, they said, "The men can go down to the Wall. The women have to go to this little section over here by the Wall. They cannot be with the men." I went to the Wall with Sol Lichtenfeld. They were members of the United Hebrew Congregation, Florence and Sol. They since have both passed away, but Florence went with the ladies and Sol and I went down to the wall. I said, "Sol, stand up by the Wall. Put your hand on the Wall and I'll take your picture." I took his picture. He said, "Alright, Nap, you go there and I'll take your picture." "No. No." "Nap, go! You're here, have your picture taken standing at the Wall. Give me the camera." So I went over and I put my hand on the Wall. Now that is an experience! This is a stone wall and I can feel the tingle going through my hand. I mean, I was amazed. That I didn't expect.

You always hear about people who go and put a little note in the Wall asking for a blessing or a prayer or something. The lady that was a secretary for an organization that I did belong to at that time, her daughter was very ill - she had cancer. I took a little slip of paper and I wrote, "Please help Ethel's daughter." I folded it up and stuck it in the crack in the wall. A few days later, Sol, Florence, Jean and I went to another part of the city near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I figured while we are here, we'll look. While we were there, I figured I left a note for Ethel's daughter in the Wall, here I'm on their turf now. Let me see if I can get someone to say a prayer for her. So I asked someone there if I could speak to a priest that could say a prayer for someone that was ill. They took me in, Jean and the others stayed in there and they took me into a room, waiting and waiting. The priest comes running out tying his robe and everything as if they just woke him up. I explained that this friend's daughter is very ill, would he please say a mass for her. He said, "I would be happy to my son." So, I give him a little folding money and he writes out a receipt. I said, "Thank you very much. I appreciate it very much." We got home and the first meeting I went to and I saw Ethel. I said, "Ethel," and I explained the situation. I told her what had transpired at the wall in Jerusalem at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and I gave her the receipt that the priest had given me. She said, "Nap, you know. Right about that time she did feel better."

So, I've always said, "I'm not a believer." But certain things happen from time to time that maybe make you a believer. And I'll be very honest with you. When we sit there at the services and Rabbi Elizabeth Hersh or Rabbi Howard Kaplansky say the prayer for healing, then afterwards a moment of silent prayer on your own, I try to go down the line and mention as many as I possibly can that I know are ill. At the end when they're ready to start the service I say, "Lord, would you please help any that I may have forgotten." It never hurts.

Frank: Thank you.

## Harold Kuenstler

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Harold Kuenstler conducted on September 14, 1999 at his residence at 1136 Indian Trails Drive, St. Louis, MO 63132.

Mr. Kuenstler: Illinois.

Frank: What kind of up bringing did you have, first generally siblings?

Mr. Kuenstler: I have a sister younger than me. She is eight years younger. Then I have another sister that is thirteen years younger than me.

Frank: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Kuenstler: He had a neighborhood grocery store in Venice, Illinois, and he was in the grocery business in World War I and World War II in that area.

Frank: What was your Jewish practice prior to World War II? What kind of traditions did you have? Did you go to services sometimes? What did you do in the home?

Mr. Kuenstler: In the home, my mother observed Friday night very religiously but of course my father had the grocery store so he did not come home until six thirty at night. Then my mother on Saturday would visit because that was the day that you kept the Sabbath. There was a difference between my sister and myself of eight years so I was the only child. So she would take me with her whenever she'd visit other Jewish women in Madison, Illinois and Granite City, Illinois for those eight years.

Frank: Your sister was older?

Mr. Kuenstler: No, she was eight years younger than me. My other sister was thirteen years younger than me. There was quite a difference in our ages. I was *Bar Mitzvahed* in 1931. Since we didn't have a *cheder* in Illinois we had a Hebrew teacher come over from St. Louis and give me private lessons. So I was *Bar Mitzvahed* in 1931 at the *shul* on Delmar Boulevard (called BSKI today).

Frank: What was your Jewish practice prior to World War II?

Mr. Kuenstler: Like I said, we observed all the Jewish holidays. They finally built a *shul* about a block away from where we lived in Madison during the depression days used brick and so on. We never had a regular Rabbi. They'd hire somebody for the high holy days. The mothers of Jewish children, they would teach Sunday school. Our daughters, our three daughters first went there until we finally joined United Hebrew.

Frank: Give some specific examples about how you lived your Judaism, celebrating Shabbat.

Mr. Kuenstler: Like I say my mother did all her baking usually Thursday and Friday, she did a lot of baking in those days. Bread she made, she was a Hungarian, the finest cook in the world. As far as going to services, we never had any Friday night service because we had no *shul* there. We had a good Jewish congregation but we just never had any place to.... When we'd have the High Holy Days before we built the *shul*, we'd rent a KP Hall or some other building just for the high holy days. It just so happened that a lot of times the World Series would come out on the High Holy Days.

Celebrating Passover. My mother used to always have the Passover. She had a brother that lived in Granite City, Illinois. My two sisters and then we had always other people around. I don't know if they were from college. My sisters went to college.

Frank: When did you go into the military?

Mr. Kuenstler: I went into the military January 9, 1942.

Frank: Where did you get into the military?

Mr. Kuenstler: I was sworn in, in the basement of the post office in Peoria, Illinois. January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Frank: How did you get into the military?

Mr. Kuenstler: Well, I enlisted in East St. Louis with another Jewish boy. I belonged at the time, we had enough youth at that time that we had a chapter AZA, which is a Junior B'nai Brith. So one of the boys went and enlisted in the air corps. He came when we had a father-son breakfast and he told us how good it was and so forth and so on. Since I was 1A and single I figured that sounds pretty good. So one of the other Jewish boys from AZA, he and I went out and we enlisted in the air corps. That's how we got into the military. Then I forgot to notify my draft board, and meantime while I was at Jefferson Barracks, they called my dad and said we need your son, where is he at? I forgot to notify them.

Frank: Why did you get into the military?

Mr. Kuenstler: The reason I got into the military to be honest was to stay out of the army. I don't know I think I was always fascinated by planes. I can remember when Scott Field had balloons, dirigibles, when I was a kid. I was old enough. I went in 1942, I was 24 years old. The war had started already in '39 so this is '41 Pearl Harbor. I just figured the air corps would be easier and I'm not crazy about guns or shooting at somebody else to kill them.



Frank: Where did you serve in the military, location and branch?

Mr. Kuenstler: From Peoria they sent us up to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois. We took our IQ test there and so forth. They issued all our clothing, everything. Then I took my basic training here at Jefferson Barracks in Missouri. At the time I went in the military I was going to Washington University Night School taking accounting courses. When this happened I didn't finish my tests even for the semester. At Jefferson Barracks, they talked us into going into airplane mechanics. I wanted to go to Lawry Field that was the clerical school. No. It was crowded and you could never get in so I signed up for airplane mechanics.

Anyhow, from there they sent me down to San Antonio. That was called Duncan Field, today it is called Blackburn Field. It's right across from Kelly Field. There they started drilling again and I went up to my sergeant and said I can't take this any more you gotta get me off that field. So they set me up and they had me operating a stock record billing machine since I had one year of typing in high school. Then I was supposed to, I got PFC (Private First Class) and then I was supposed to get corporal rating. Tech Sergeant said he put my name in and at the last minute he took me off and put somebody else on. So we had words about it and then he was just loaned to us anyhow. He was a 9<sup>th</sup> Air Depot group with the 13<sup>th</sup>. Another sergeant took over and said, "I heard what happened to you. So he said you want to stay with me? I'll make sure you go up to three stripes or if you want to I can put your name on a list they're going to Albuquerque, New Mexico, permanent party."

I said, "Put my name on that list." So I went to Albuquerque, New Mexico. I was there in '42. For the following year I was in charge of the message center at the post headquarters. Ratings came out again and I got up to three stripes. I always wanted to be a first three grader. So when the first three grades came out like staff I didn't get it somebody else got it. I don't know, I'm just one of these curious guys that I want to know why. So I went in and talked up to the captain the post adjutant. I guess he didn't like that idea too much. Anyhow, the following week I come up to my desk one day and he says you better take the rest of the day off and pack up, you're shipping out.

So they shipped me down to Fort Worth, Texas, and there's three letters of the alphabet that always sort of scared me because I could read everything on message center, see all the mail coming in P.O.E., Port of Embarkation. That word scared me. I was permanent party, having a good time. This outfit was ready to go overseas.

Sure enough within a couple of weeks they put us on a train and shipped us up to a camp in the Catskills somewhere away from any town. Next thing you know, after a couple of weeks they moved us out at midnight on a train that took us to the Staten Island Ferry over to Staten Island and there was a big ship there. I

think it was a cruise ship, but it was a big one. I don't know how many decks it had. But anyhow they pushed us up the gang plank. The gangplank looked like it had the climb. There was a lady standing there from Salvation Army and she gave us a little green bag of stuff like a sewing kit and so forth.

We didn't know where we were going. We thought we were going to England. You know the airforce was primarily in England at that time. We were out at sea about a week or ten days and they gave us little pamphlets about how to behave, conduct yourself in North Africa. So we land in Casablanca. We stayed in North Africa for about thirteen months. We were in Algiers, Constantine, Tunis. Then over there we went from Tunis to Naples and stayed there for some time. We went to Foggia Airfield. We were a small group about 250-300 men was called an air service squadron. I was in air corps supply, I was a clerk. That was it.

From there, we were in Italy and then they maintained a 4<sup>th</sup> squadron emergency landing field in Yugoslavia. I was supposed to go but I was in the hospital at that time so I didn't go. Anyhow, we wound up when Germany surrendered we were in southeastern portion of Italy, Bari, Italy, way down. We were in an area where we could sleep every night just like you sleep at home. We had a few air raids at the airfield, we were at an airfield outside of Algiers. Few times you heard the anti-aircraft going. But one night we heard a real.... We all ran out and they were running into wherever they could hide; the garbage dump or something. I just stood out there and watched the circle. The Nazi fighter plane with a swastika on it went across and didn't drop anything on it and went away and that was it. But other then that we could sleep every night and we didn't have any problem.

The bomb groups were on that side and that side. We were never on an airfield except at Bari we were practically at the edge of a runway. But other then that the bombers would take off in the morning B17's and B24's. When we were in Tunis I went up on a training mission once. I didn't know it was going to be a training mission. You know when it gets monotonous you want to find some excitement. So I told the crew chief. He said, yeah we're going up so I went up and we were up in the air and I'm up near the flight deck. All of a sudden there are two other B24's on each side of us. So I asked him and I said what's going on here? Are we too close? No. We're on a training mission. This is the way we go over a target to drop the bombs. So we were up about four hours. I guess another thrill I got I stand there at the entrance to the cockpit. They didn't have a door of course. I didn't talk to the pilot and co-pilot and we were going down to land and here where going to land and here's a runway coming up at you and it's quite a thrill, but I didn't go up anymore.

When Germany surrendered we were in Bari, Italy and I got two trips to Rome, what they call rest leave. In fact when Germany surrendered I think, when I came back to camp everybody was gone practically. I said where is everybody? they

said they broke up the outfit. War is over with Germany, we've heard rumors we're going to Salzburg, Austria, go to permanent party this at that. Party occupation.

Well, the biggest thrill I had happened in all of this time. The First Sergeant came in and he said Kuenstler, I say yeah. He said you better back up your gear, you're leaving in the morning. You're going home. I said what you're not kidding me? He said no. They need your spec number sitting down at Naples, Italy outfit. So the next morning I didn't say anything, I didn't ask any more questions. They put us on a truck and took us out of the airfield and there was a B-17 sitting there. About ten of us they loaded us on. Get on, about an hour later were down in Naples. So we were there about a couple weeks processing us. In other words we were supposed to come home get a 30-day furlough and go to the Pacific Theater War. So they put us on a cargo ship, a little bitty ship all by ourselves crossing the Atlantic in August and it was rough. We had some bad weather. I didn't think we were going to make it.

Anyhow, while we were at sea Uncle Harry Truman dropped the atomic bomb. Then while I was home, you see, I didn't have enough points. You had to have 85 points and I didn't have enough. He dropped the point system from 85 to 80, extended the time to VJ Day, and then Japan surrendered. So then I had enough points so I stayed home for my 30 days and I didn't call up or ask questions. Went back up to Camp Grant and when I got there they had orientation. They said ok. Every time you don't have anything to do look on that bulletin board and your name is liable to come up anytime. So within a week, I must have gone up on a Sunday and the following Saturday night I was home discharged. That was it. No, they tried to get me to sign up for the Reserves that's what it was. I said no, why you'd get another rating you only have to meet twice a week. You get paid. I said no, I don't want to. So that is my life there.

Frank: You referred to President Harry Truman as Uncle Harry.

Mr. Kuenstler: Oh yeah...if it weren't for him I'd be over there in the Pacific Theater War. Have you ever visited his library at Independence? You got to see it. It saves everything from World War II. He was OK.

Frank: What did you do in the military? Military Occupation Specialty? .

Mr. Kuenstler: Well, there was no occupation for me. My only spec number was a clerk. That's all.

Frank: Did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism during the war or have any expectations?

Mr. Kuenstler: Yes. We had our mess officer, he was Jewish and he was a little younger than me. He was a semi-pro football player very nice to me. Sometimes, I'd

write a letter and say there was nothing in there, I just would like if you would OK it without reading it. I only bothered him once or twice and I don't know what it was about. Anyhow, when we were in Tunis there was a beautiful Jewish synagogue there, I guess you would call it Sephardic because the *bimah* was down here and you'd sit up on the sides. And the women sat upstairs.

Frank: So it was in the center?

Mr. Kuenstler: Yeah. So he asked me once you want to go and I said sure. So he had his jeep and I sat in the front and we're going along and he picked up some other officer and I got in the back. So we got to the congregation, he just gave them a lift, they weren't Jewish. He said don't ever do that again. I said, what do you mean? He said you're my guest let them get in the back. So he took me a few times. Then I met a couple of Jewish families, one of them had three kids. I never went to their place and the only thing I could get them is stuff from the PX, like toothpaste, soap or something. It just so happened when we were in Tunis, there I don't know how many bomb groups we had. They weren't ready in Italy the airfield so they had to stay there. That's when I went up that time. We had a warehouse of emergency rations and they had me going picking up cots and equipment. That was my job. They give me a truck driver, black guy, quartermaster. I don't know every day or whatever the captain would tell us. He was from World War I but we had number ten cans of cheese, fruit cocktail, peaches, I mean all...and I wanted to take it to that family, but he warned us. He said if I catch you ever taking anything out of here and selling it or giving it to anybody, he said, I'll throw you back in the guardhouse so far they'll never find you. But he says you want to take a can home every now and then to your own tent, fine. But don't advertise it and I did that. We had this cook in our tent, young guy and we'd bring bread and other stuff and every Saturday night we'd have a little something to eat. Somebody would bring some wine you know.

When we were in Rome I went to services there in a synagogue, in Rome. And then some Friday nights they would have a sheet out. Once the chaplain couldn't show up so one of the ministers conducted the service. He took the Jewish prayer book in English and he conducted the service. But I don't know if they let us off the holidays overseas or not I can't remember. That I can't remember. Here in the States they did because I remember I came home once from San Antonio once I think I had a three-day pass. I guess it was for Passover or something.

Frank: Did you encounter any barriers within it?

Mr. Kuenstler: No, I don't think so. The only time I had a problem I was in air corps supply. This guy was a master sergeant who became a warrant officer. I never had words with him or nothing and then all of the sudden...First, I was the acting Sergeant of the Guard. That's how I got to know this crew chief, I posted. Then, the next thing I know I look on the bulletin board and they put me on guard duty. It was a main highway and then we had this road that led to our camp. So you

had a tent there. Right across from the tent you had a kid's a swingset. That was where the headquarter trucks filled up their gasoline for the bombers. Well, anyhow they put me on guard duty and they had us pulling guard duty from 12 midnight until eight in the morning and I know that's against regulations. I think you're supposed to be on two and off four, if I'm not mistaken. Well anyhow, I didn't say anything; I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction.

So, they took 55 gallon drums, the guys that worked in the headquarters and the welders cut them in half and then they put things there for the stove. We were burning one-hundred octane gasoline for heat. One hundred octane, now that's dangerous. So this thing where it was they had a cot there for us. It would flare up a little bit and I kicked it a little bit and it started to flare up. Luckily, I ran across the road and grabbed a fire extinguisher and put it out. Well to make a long story short, with that stove going and if you don't go, get up and get out you get sleepy.

So I lay down and the next thing I know the Sergeant of the Guard came by from my outfit. He said, "How are things? Anything wrong? No? You sure? You sure you're telling me everything?" I said, "Yeah." When I woke up my '45 was gone. The holster was still there and the army belt but the gun was gone. So I didn't tell anybody and he went away and a half an hour he came back. He come up there and he says, "This belong to you?" He said, "Harold, now I don't care but what if the officer of the day had come around. Get up and get out and walk around and get some air." So that is what I did. But if they'd caught me, boy, I don't know. They'd probably take my stripes away and court martial me, I guess. But after a while, they took me off of that.

I never got back to air corps supply because when we were somewhere, I don't know where it was, they had a staff sergeant in the engineering section and they put him in charge of digging a latrine. Rather than pointing out guys he said, "Anybody want to volunteer?" So I volunteered to stay away from the warrant officer at air corps supply. Then they gave me a truck and some guys and the trucking company black guy they always drove the truck. We're going to Foggia. Old brick buildings are falling down and we picked up the bricks clean them off real good and bring them back and somebody made a floor for the officers with the bricks. So finally I had to go back and find a First Sergeant. He says, "I have nothing else for you on the outside. You'd better go report back to air corps supplies." "Do I have to?" He said "Yeah."

So there was another master sergeant there who was nice to me. So he had me typing requisitions. But that master sergeant...I dunno I never had no words with him or nothing. That was the only problem.

But the Jewish boys that were in my outfit, I was never friendly with any of them. One guy was in charge of the PX. He never said boo. One guy was from St. Louis I don't remember the name, Rose I think. He was a medic. He never said a

word to me. I ignored him. I had a Jewish boy in my tent, though he was in charge of motor pool, younger than me. His last name was Ashkinaze and I can never remember his first name. He was a nice guy clean cut guy. Another guy was Catholic and one was Protestant. There was four of us and other than that it wasn't too bad.

When I look back on it, it was like a vacation with pay. You know the living conditions wasn't that great and the food wasn't that great but you got to see part of the world that I will probably never see again. The only thing that was bad was going over I don't know if it was the second or third day. Every time you go to eat they throw this pill in your mouth it was atropine, a substitute for quinine, because of malaria. But the tenth day I got deathly sick and I thought I was going to die. So I sat on these stairs they had these stairs and the medics were there and I went to them. Can't do nothing for you. I just sat there and I said I might as well die here you're going to be responsible. So finally I went back I got tired and tried to lay down. Just about that time, VROOM VROOM VROOM we had a submarine alert at twelve midnight. That's just as good a night as well die that way, but nothing happened.

That was a story too when we left. At midnight, we got to travel by train to the ferry to Staten Island and then I was tired. They put us in a library and stripped it and they had the pipes with the canvas. You had four high. I was on the bottom there. I got up in the morning and said well I'll go out on deck and see what's going on. I went out on deck and what do I see? Big convoy, nothing but water. No land. I never felt the boat pull out.

We had a big ship over there. It must have been a cruiser it wasn't a battle ship and over here we had a converter flat top with planes on it, fighter planes but they had the wing tips were on and there were no propellers on, they were bring ferried. So they went in first at Casablanca, the flat top went in first while the other convoy went through the Straits of Gibraltar. But we went in Casablanca so we didn't have to go through the Straits. But we were only there about a month in Casablanca, that's all we were there.

Frank: What was the warrant officer?

Mr. Kuenstler: Yeah the warrant officer.

Frank: He was rude to you?

Mr. Kuenstler: No, but he's the guy I found out that put me on, I'm not supposed to be on guard duty, only corporals, Pfc.'s or privates.

Frank: He just had something against you?

Mr. Kuenstler: I don't know but I didn't want to start in with him. You know they can make life miserable. I think he had been there a long time some of these guys who had been there a long time they resented us you know. Just like when we were at Jefferson Barracks you start this drilling, you know marching. A lot of the guys they think this is a joke and here's the drill instructor trying to teach you how to march and this and that and so forth. Finally they put a note on the bulletin board. Anybody that goofs off will go an extra hour. Called the goon squad. One day the chief drill instructor comes out and he had us at attention and he walked up and down the lines. "Boy ain't that a beard, ain't that a beard." I had a three day beard on, they didn't tell us and I didn't like to shave you know in those days. It was April of '42. My mother and father for my birthday gave me an electric razor but I could never shave with a blade. When I was in Albuquerque it was so dry there I felt like I was peeling off my skin. So the drill instructor said, "Ok. You go back to your barracks. You shave and be back here in five minutes." Well, I couldn't and we finally came back and he put us on the goon squad.

That was rough the KP, but that's what they did down in San Antonio. If you goofed off down there, they put you on KP for a week. You talk about humidity. It was worse than St. Louis here. In those days there were no fans. I mean we take showers three, four times a day trying to cool off in our sleep. But Albuquerque was nice. It would be hot in the day and you'd get in the shade and it would be cool at night we were out away from Albuquerque. We were out in the mountains in an old airfield used by Piper Cubs. The main airfield even today where TWA and all them fly out of there that was B-24's flying out of there. They were teaching them bombardiers. But we used to have sandstorms down there and they would put the covers over the engines and they finally moved these planes down to Bartlesville, Louisiana.

Frank: Did you experience any kind of anti-Semitism during your service? If so in what ways?

Mr. Kuenstler: You know I don't think so. In the service everybody, we were just one big happy family and everybody tried to help each other. I didn't find that. No, I didn't find any anti-Semitism. Like I said, the only Jewish relationship I had an officer was that one guy with a master sergeant. What the heck was his last name? He met a Jewish girl when we were in Algeria. When the war was over he went back there and married her. I never met her or anything. I can't remember his last name, but he was a heck of a nice guy. Oh that's what happened. When we were at Jefferson Barracks. You had 30 guys down and 30 up and one guy got up and he was a semi-pro football player, too. Not this guy, he was a regular guy a private just like us. He fell out of bed and they didn't know what the hell and they took him to the hospital. Next thing you know they marched a whole bunch of us up to the medical tent and they gave us a shot. Boy that shot burned. Spinal meningitis broke out. Guys used to go on sick call and some guys would goof off on sick call so they...and some guy got sick one night

and they wouldn't let him go and he died. They put out a bulletin. You can go on sick call 24 hours a day. So, I don't know how they washed that away.

I only met one Jewish chaplain at that time and he conducted a Friday night service. The other times I went there at Algiers I think they just had a service and the chaplain conducted the service. We met there somewhere at the USO or something. I went to a service I remember in Rome, High Holy Days and then in San Antonio. Then in Albuquerque they'd come in from other towns, Jewish people. Like they didn't have a lot of people but they'd come in from Roswell and some other towns near Albuquerque. I spent about a year in Albuquerque and I enjoyed it.

But like I say what you speak up and they tell you don't volunteer and I was fortunate I volunteered that time. I was in the 13<sup>th</sup> air group and I wasn't superstitious but you hear all these rumors they said that they went to Caledonia and they got sunken but I never find out whether they did or not.

I wasn't ready to go overseas I'll tell you the truth. That's the only thing I feared was going overseas, the boat trip. See my mother and father came from Hungary. I think that my father came here in 1910. I don't remember what year my mother came but they weren't married at the time they met here in St. Louis. In 1922 my mother and father went back to visit their parents and I was four years old and an only child and we went on this big maritania belonged to Cunard Line, going over that ship was to Casablanca. That was a big ship and we didn't feel it. But coming back, I didn't think we were going to make it. We hit some bad, bad weather.

Frank: How long did it take you to travel back?

Mr. Kuenstler: About 15 days. We went to Boston Harbor, we hit some bad....you know at night it would be going like this I got up that one morning and went out on deck and the ship would be going this way and come up and go this way. Course a lot of guys got sick. Then one day it started with this with the front end going down and the propeller out of the water and the ship would vibrate. You thought the whole damn ship is going to go to pieces. Scared the hell out of me. That Atlantic is the most treacherous body of water. Very treacherous. We're out there by ourselves. I don't know how many guys we had on that ship. Can't be a lot because it was a small ship, very small. The ship going overseas there were those convoys you just....I don't know how many ships were out there. I couldn't even count them. You could just take a 360-degree and wherever you'd look....Of course they had a lot of destroyers zig zagging around us. That night they started dropping....I don't know how long that lasts. But the Air Corps fortunately were servicing bombers our engineering section. The bombers always



had to be far back. The fighter groups were up towards the front. We were far back, I'll tell you. When they take off for the front, God. They seem like a bunch of flies coming in from all directions. They go out at 7 o'clock in the morning and come back at four.

Frank: Wow! That's a pretty long mission!

Mr. Kuenstler: This Ashkinaze he found one guy he knew. He was from New York and this lieutenant, he was a bombardier on one of the bombers and they flew over Westende, [Germany] and he said hell they didn't see nothing through the smoke. We just had to find an alternate place to drop our bombs. He said but we weren't going to bring them back and they lost a lot of planes going over Westende, too. I saw one B-20. In the distance there was a landing field and the British also used it. They'd go out at night. This plane wasn't camouflaged at all. He's coming in for his landing. All of a sudden they shoot up red flares at him. So he gunned it and he did this and he started coming over our area like that. I could tell at the angle he's in trouble there's something wrong. Sure enough, when he finally made a turn on that angle, down he went. But those guys, I tell you when they come off of a raid they give them a shot of whiskey and they're always looking for the gunners. When I was in the hospital, I was at the PX and I got to talking to a guy. He's seeing a psychiatrist. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I don't think I can fly anymore." He was a gunner. "I told him I can't fly no more, I can't go up there." I said, "What are you going to do?" "I'm going back and see a psychiatrist. He'll straighten me out."

When I was in this ward there was one kid, all his skin here was exposed and black. That guy couldn't have been over nineteen. Then they had another section back there in the ward going that way. They had to come through our ward, they were burned. One guy in our ward he had a hand that was this big [like a cantaloupe] and the electric heating glove went out and it was cold up there, flying, and it just swelled up. They were sending him back to the states. But I was in the army hospital for 55 days.

Frank: Why was that?

Mr. Kuenstler: I had an operation that was supposed to be done that summer of '41. But this Jewish doctor says it won't heal in the hot weather. He says let's wait for winter time to operate and I said OK. So when I enlisted they don't examine you that close. We were getting ready to go overseas. We were in Fort Worth, Texas. I went to a doctor. He says, "You know what you got there?" I says, "Yeah." "How come you didn't have that taken care of?" "It doesn't bother me that often." He says, "Well there not bound to bother you now." I got into Italy and it swelled up. It wouldn't drain and it started getting bigger. So I went on sick call to a base

dispensary and had it looked at by not our squadron doctor. He was no good. He was a creep. See this thing here? I was playing softball and that's what happened. I went to him and he said, "Oh. That's nothing. It will go away." That's what my squadron doctor told me. To this day...

Frank: Still the bruise on your finger.

Mr. Kuenstler: Anyhow, this captain says, "You better have it operated on. I'm going to send you down to the hospital." I says, "How long will it take?" He says, "Maybe fourteen days. So I come down there and go in there to report and a Major's there. He looked at the paper the Captain had written up. He says, "We don't have time to fool around with these cysts." I said, "Major don't you think you ought to examine me? The Captain says I should get it operated on." "Well, OK. Drop your pants. Oh, yeah. I see it." He sent me up to the ward. This other doctor comes in. I guess it was a couple weeks before they decided to operate on me. You know, they give you the tests. He says, "It's right here where the crack of your butt is, see. I'm going to cut you like a 'u.' There is a flap and we'll scrape that bone off of there and what's on that bone, hair or whatever that's causing the infection. They had me in there fourteen days. This was in April around Passover. So I finally asked the lieutenant colonel (LTC) what had happened in the mean time I got out of bed. I asked the doctor, "I'd like to get out of bed." "I don't think so you're not strong enough." Hell, I've been eating like a horse." "Yeah, but you haven't been moving your body. OK you get out on us and you hold on that bed and watch your first step." I fell to the ground. I thought I would pass out. Well, anyhow I got my strength I go up on the deck on the roof and I take of my pajama top and sun myself. So I come down and this LTC he took over the ward. When I came down that time the ward boy said, "Hey you better get in there. They're just about finished. I laid down on my stomach and he pulls my top off. "You got a nice sun tan. Did you pull your bottom down too?" "Oh no." "Well, that's what you'll be doing." He says, "That will dry it out. You go down to the nurse and she'll put on a clean dressing every time.

Frank: You would say that generally your army experience was positive, especially as a Jew in the military.

Mr. Kuenstler: Well, yeah. It was an experience you just can't forget. It's just not possible to forget it.

## George Lamb

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with George Lamb conducted on September 15, 1999 at his residence at 14301 Olive Blvd., Chesterfield, MO 63017.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

Mr. Lamb: Bronx, New York.

Frank: Tell me a little bit about your upbringing.

Mr. Lamb: It was Orthodox. My dad wasn't very religious, however, we did go to services on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. Once in a while we'd go to *shul*. I was *Bar Mitzvahed* and I went to Talmud Torah. I learned to read a Jewish newspaper. We lived with my grandma and grandpa and they were very religious. Friday night we had a Friday service and on Saturday we couldn't do anything. My grandma would read some stories to us. I can remember on Friday mornings the house was very busy. Incidentally we lived in a three family home. My aunt lived on the top floor and we lived on the ground floor. My grandfather lived on the second floor. On Fridays everybody was busy doing something. They were making *lukshin*, you know what *lukshin* is, its spaghetti flattened and they put them on the radiators for drying. They'd buy a live fish on Wednesday or Thursday and stick it in the bathtub. So when Friday came they would make gefilte fish. The house smelled from cooking and baking. Every Friday it was the same thing. During holidays, I mean the big holidays, we had to go to *shul* because my grandpa lived with us. That's about it off the top of my head.

Frank: What did your father do?

Mr. Lamb: My father worked nights for Universal Film in the shipping department where the reels of film would be distributed to the theaters in New York.

Frank: Do you have any siblings?

Mr. Lamb: I have a brother and two sisters. I am the oldest.

Frank: You said what some of your Jewish practice was prior to World War II.

Mr. Lamb: Well, like I said, my dad wasn't very religious. He didn't go to *shul* on Friday night or Saturdays but if something came up where my grandpa would say something we would go to *shul*. But on the holidays we would always go to *shul*. We kept a kosher home but I'd eat outside whatever I wanted to eat and my dad would do the same.

Frank: What about Shabbat? How would you keep your observance at home?

Mr. Lamb: My mom would light candles and we'd have our Friday night Shabbat dinner. Incidentally, when I was *Bar Mitzvahed* they needed a minyon so they would pay me a quarter if I would be a part of the minyon. It was a little *shul* and they needed people. I'll be 80 next year so it's a long time back.

Frank: When did you get into the military?

Mr. Lamb: In 1941 things were going on in Europe that we were aware of and I wanted to do something. My folks wouldn't let me get in the service. But I was 21 in June of 1941 and I would be drafted sooner or later anyway. So, I volunteered and went to Fort Dix. At Fort Dix I took some tests and I ended up at Jefferson Barracks. There I took some more tests. I wanted to get into the airforce. At that time it was an elite part of the service. It was part of the army, but they wouldn't just take anybody. You had to pass some tests. I had passed the tests. They said I would make a good radio operator, so they sent me to Scott Field. In Scott Field I graduated as an instructor and that was my whole service, as an instructor in the United States

Frank: You got in the military because you were going to be drafted.

Mr. Lamb: It was September and in December the Japanese invaded Hawaii. I was already in service at the time.

Frank: In the military you were an instructor on radio.

Mr. Lamb: Yes.

Frank: Did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism at all during the war?

Mr. Lamb: When I first went into service being from an Orthodox family at Jefferson barracks they had services on Friday night or Saturday morning and Rabbi Isserman, I don't know if you're familiar with the name, conducted the service at Jefferson Barracks. To me it looked like a goyish, a Gentile service, I couldn't fathom it. I wasn't used to that.

I had brought my *tefilin* with me when I was in the service and somebody stole it while I was in the barracks. I put them on because I thought the Lord would...if I didn't do what I was supposed to do. It went by the wayside after a couple of weeks. I did go to services if I was off. On Union Avenue there was a YMHA (Young Men's Hebrew Association)

and we used to come in on the weekends. It was a part of the USO (United Service Organization) and had some socializing but that was about it.

Frank: Since you were nearby [St. Louis] you were able to celebrate some of the holidays.

Mr. Lamb: All the holidays we were able to celebrate

Frank: Did you encounter any barriers while trying to practice Judaism?

Mr. Lamb: Not really. I don't know why I didn't. In fact there were two Gentile fellows that became my protectors. They took a liking to me. Being from the Bronx, I didn't know about horses and this guy was from Kentucky and the other was from Texas. They'd go on Sunday morning out to Meyers Park. There used to be a riding academy out where the police academy is now. We used to rent horses and ride through Forest Park. Why I don't know they wanted me to come along and I felt, I didn't know anybody else. So, I went along with them.

Frank: Did you encounter any anti-Semitic acts?

Mr. Lamb: Maybe some current. No. I didn't have any problem with it. I've heard other people say they did but I didn't have any problem.

Frank: In my interviews I've experienced the majority of people have not had overt acts but there has been some subtle acts.

Mr. Lamb: My name was Lembersky, and when we got married we changed the name L-E-M-B-E-R-S-K-Y.

Frank: Interesting.

Mr. Lamb: Yeah we changed it.

Frank: Any reason for that?

Mr. Lamb: We thought that it was a little too long for business and my brothers and sisters had this name (Lamb) on their birth certificates.

Frank: When did you get out of the military.

Mr. Lamb: October of '45.

Frank: Then you moved to St. Louis?

Mr. Lamb: I had married a girl in the St. Louis area. While I was in the service I spent some time in Arizona, Kingman, Arizona. We set up schools there. I spent about a year there. It was 1940 something, '44 or '45 they sent me back to Scott Field. So I started out in Scott Field and then ended up in Scott Field. Like I said it was just strictly teaching radio. I was a Staff Sergeant.

Frank: So your overall experience in the air force was positive?

Mr. Lamb: Oh yeah, yeah.

Frank: Do you have anything else you would like to share about your experience?

Mr. Lamb: About my service? Not really. The only thing that I could think of was that when it came time for me to be shipped any time there was always some officer that put some kind of information in there to keep me from being shipped out. So I only managed to stay in the states for one reason or another. Whoever I was working with, they either liked me or wanted me or needed me or whatever the reason was. I was never sent overseas for that reason, I think.

Frank: It was a reflection of your work?

Mr. Lamb: I imagine that's what it was, because most of the officers were ninety day wonders that had just gotten out of college and became an officer. They needed help. Being that I knew more then they did, I think that's why they wanted me to stay. At Scott Field, I had ideas. I made up things. A breadboard for circuits, you know what breadboards are? It's a board with pegs on it. So if you're trying to demonstrate, really in physics or science, if you're trying to demonstrate direct current with the battery or light you would take the battery and put it here and take the wire and put it in the clip. These breadboards worked different circuits or explained things or demonstrations and I would come up with ideas like that.

Frank: When you got out of the military you stayed in St. Louis?

Mr. Lamb: I stayed in St. Louis.

[Pause in Tape]

Mr. Lamb: ...wooden barracks and we would go through the meals in the mess hall. We had civilians waiting on us in the air force, air corps at the time. We sat down at the table and they'd throw out a pitcher of milk and put it at the center of the table. This was before the war. Civilians would bring us out food. We had no trays. We used china plates, glasses, and cups. You know it was fabulous.

Frank: It was a real gentleman's society.

Mr. Lamb: It really was and as far as firing rifles and pistols or stuff like that. I didn't even know what a gun was. They would call us out when time was up to qualify. They would give you a rifle to fire a couple of rounds to get to use the thing. There was a target at which we fired. The same with a 45. We had to qualify firing it. When I was at Scott Field as the instructor I was a shift chief so they gave us a 45 to carry around. You know, who's gonna come after us at Scott Field? But anyway, the 45 was loaded and I used to walk around with a gun because I was in charge of the whole shift. That was interesting. But as far as firing I was a sharp shooter when I went to Jefferson Barracks. When I was a kid, I belonged to the Junior Naval Reserve, which was like the boy scouts, something similar, and I learned how to cock your arms moving the weapon around. What was it called?

Frank: I know there's a technical name. I don't remember it.

Mr. Lamb: Well anyway I had learned that and I learned how to march and I learned to turn corners and about face and the whole bit and squad right, squad left. So at Jefferson Barracks they made an instructor out of me and I didn't know much. It was chaotic, really, the service at the time there. It was not really organized the way it should be. It was great, I mean, I enjoyed it. I really did, except I missed home. I didn't have any problems all the way through the service..

Frank: It was a positive experience.

Mr. Lamb: Yes.

## Leonard A. Lerner

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Leonard A. Lerner conducted on September 3, 1999 at his residence at 278 Idle Hour Drive, Lexington, KY 40502.

Mr. Lerner: I was originally born in Boston and my family moved to Huntington, West Virginia when I was very young. I lived there for quite a while and I was brought up very Orthodox. The young lady who I married, two weeks ago was 59 years ago. Her family belonged to the temple so I joined and belonged to both. This picture was taken in Burma in spring of '45. The gentleman on the left is Rabbi Ralph Blumenthal (he was my temple rabbi in Huntington, West Virginia) who was the chaplain in that area and he came to Bhamo, Burma to conduct a *seder* for the Jewish boys in that area. He was a nice guy, he stayed in service. He and his wife separated and he stayed in service. He's a very good friend of mine. We liked him very much.

OK, I have an excellent long memory. I can tell you more about what I did forty or fifty years ago then I can the day before yesterday. I am 83 years old so give me a break on my mentality.

Originally from Boston, Massachusetts born to illiterate immigrants from Russia. My father was a soldier in the Russian Army that was soundly beaten by Japan in 1904 and 1905. He was from a little village and he came back and met my mother and they were married. They saw a couple of the pogroms like if you remember "Fiddler on the Roof," when they showed the Cossacks coming in. Well, they saw those and didn't like it. So they brought my mother's two sisters and their mother to the states, their brothers were already here. My father was a carpenter by trade and he found employment. During World War I, he worked in the navy shipyards in Chelsea right outside of Boston. When the war was winding down he heard that there was employment in the Kanawha Valley near Charleston, West Virginia. That's when they started building the chemical [companies]. At one time it was the chemical center of the world, Union Carbide and all those big companies. We moved to Huntington. We had an uncle of mine that lived there and he commuted. I lived in Huntington until 1965 until I came to Lexington.

I was raised in a very Orthodox family. I have two brothers one younger, one older. My younger brother still lives in Huntington. He was in the service. He had a very nice tour in service in an aircraft repair unit. He was in Saipan, Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal. He had quite a good experience. My older brother who is now living in Louisville was 90 last year in December. He was not called for service.

Frank: What did your father do for a living, then Jewishly?



Mr. Lerner: Well, he opened a little neighborhood grocery store because he did not have too many skills and he figured he could handle that and he did a very nice job. I worked with him 'til I got married and moved on. We were very active members of our synagogue. In fact in 1937, that was the year, one of the big years in the great depression and in Huntington we had the flood of the century. The Ohio River, the Mississippi, and St. Louis had plenty of water in '37. In 1937 I was asked to fill in for a gentleman who was the secretary of our synagogue. He had to resign and I was asked to fill in and since that day I have been very active in Jewish affairs.

Frank: Was that temple Orthodox?

Mr. Lerner: The synagogue was Orthodox and I believe you might know the name. Our rabbi there for many years, this was his full time pulpit. He came to Huntington his name was Rabbi Jacob Danzinger. Do you know the name?

Frank: I know the name.

Mr. Lerner: Well, he is the chief rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis. I attended his bris in Huntington and I walked a block from where I was working to hear him deliver his valedictorian message for his high school. Very fine outstanding young man. He is planning to retire next year. We were in Memphis for friends. We went to a bat mitzvah and a bar mitzvah. He came down out of the pulpit to embrace my wife and I. We were very good friends and we're still in touch. I note his birthdays and I called him a couple of times. In '37 I became secretary of that synagogue and I took care of the duties of the secretary. The treasurer was a very blind individual, the most pious man I ever knew in my life. I took care of his records.

Frank: What was the Jewish practice prior to World War II?

Mr. Lerner: Well, I belonged to our synagogue and a Reform temple. The reform temple gave me a tremendous experience. A couple that I was very upset with. One of the rabbis of the temple was a gentleman by the name of Abraham Feinstein. He died three years ago thereabouts. When he died he was the oldest living rabbi from HUC. I guess you'd call him an outstanding rabbi but I thought he was a genuine nothing. Friday nights in his temple the plate was passed. Just as you would see in the southern Baptist church. I think he was vice president of a committee for a council called the American Council for Judaism and he testified in Washington against the state of Israel. Abraham Feinstein. I said he was a good rabbi, he was chosen to be rabbi of the Adolf Ochs Temple (The Ochs family owned the New York Times paper) in Chattanooga and it was very heavily endowed. I'm sure he did very well. He married a lady from Huntington I knew and he died there. He was emeritus when he died and he was 93.

Then there was succession of rabbis who were very friendly. I was married in 1940 in Providence, Rhode Island. My wife's family was there. She was a native. The rabbi who married us was a gentleman by the name Israel M. Goldman. The only rabbi I had ever heard of that was in two different congregations 25 years each. He was in Providence at Temple Emanuel, Conservative. Then he went to Baltimore and I don't know the name of the temple. But he was in the march with Martin Luther King, phenomenal individual, the rabbi that is.

We married in 1940 and we had a son in 1943, January. We were very active in our synagogue and temple. We've had the candles in our home Friday nights since I can remember. I go to services regularly. I have been to more Friday night and Saturday services at our temple here than anybody in the congregation. You can verify that with your friend Rabbi Adland (The rabbi in Lexington, KY).

Frank: You also said that you pray every morning.

Mr. Lerner: Every morning. I have a meditation service and I read from the prayer book. In fact I just put our yartzeit candle away today, my father-in-law died this time of the year in 1965. I've been active in the temple, I was on the board for two sessions and I have conducted lay services at the temple. I tutor young bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah candidates in Hebrew on a no gratuity basis. I have two rules. One, they can not give me any kind of gratuity and that the youngsters and their parents must call me Lenny. The reason for that is when young people call me Lenny it makes me feel younger and that's my reward. Rabbi is a very good friend of mine. Last year I read a book and you ought to read it, Tuesday Mornings with Morrie. I gave him that book to read and he was so pleased with it that he bought a copy to give to his wife and his kol nidre sermon was on that book. I was called a couple of times to teach classes at the temple here.

In September of '43 I was called up for services. I had two days *Rosh Hashanah* for many, many years. My wife went to temple one day. Passover we had *seders* ever since I was a little kid and before you leave I want to show you a plaque referring to the *seder*. It's beautiful piece.

Frank: Why did you get into the military?

Mr. Lerner: I got into the military in 1943 (January 19) at Fort Thomas, Kentucky, right across the river from Cincinnati. I was drafted. I was married before the war. We had a son and I was not reluctant to go to military service. Having being married there was no reason to go to service until they needed me and when they needed me I went in right now. I was a first class American citizen. I tell people I'm a red blooded, tax paying American citizen. I've had 17 months overseas in World War II. I gave 11 gallons of blood to the Red Cross and the only reason I stopped was because I had open-heart surgery and the cardiologist told me no.

Frank: Where did you serve in the military?

Mr. Lerner: In this country I went to Westover field outside of Springfield, Massachusetts where I took my basic training and then I wound up at Spokane, Washington where they had the 1891<sup>st</sup> engineer aviation battalion. It turned out that our duties...we went overseas in August of '44, and we were supposed to land at Calcutta. I was on the first troop ship that was built to run fast enough to outrun any Japanese subs, so we went without convoy. The only time I was ever frightened in the army was when we got near Calcutta we got a notice over the loud speaker system that they just got a notice that the ship was too big to land in that harbor at Calcutta. So we just went right around India and went over to Bombay. It took us nine days to get to Calcutta on a 1919 Indian train that I don't want to describe.

I landed at a place called Chabua, which was in Assam, which was in northeast India over the Ganges River. You don't remember, but Tommy Dorsey had a song 'Moonlight on the Ganges' and it was one of the most beautiful records I've ever heard. It was the dirtiest, filthiest river I ever saw in my life. We went across on a ferryboat and we were right near a place called Lashio and that was the southern terminus of the Burma road. That Lashio was a general hospital and that's where this gentleman, the rabbi, was headquartered. Now he traveled all over India and Burma but that's where he came back to every time. That was his headquarters.

You've heard the term we flew over the hump? The hump was the mountain between India and Burma. Our first assignment there was to build an airstrip at Mishinaw, Burma. That is where General Stilwell and General Chiang Kai-shek had a combined headquarters in Myitkyina, they were already fighting the Japanese. A lot of people were not aware that the Japanese start invading China in 1930 and '31. They knew what they wanted. They needed coal and iron and they wanted slave labor and China had every bit of that. So they kept taking bites right along. In 1937 they conquered Nanking which was the then capitol of China and there was an incident I read the book The Rape of Nanking. It is called the Chinese holocaust and it is very gruesome but I had to read it. There was some kind of an incident. I think one of the natives either wounded or killed a Japanese soldier. The Japanese commander turned his troops loose to kill every Chinese in sight man, woman, or child. They killed in excess of 250,000 innocent people. The Rape of Nanking, the lady by the name of Iris Chang who lives in Santa Monica wrote the book. It is in the library, I read it and returned it. The Japanese were really vicious people and the United States was selling them scrap iron for their war machines. As the war escalated in Europe and the Roosevelt administration realized we were selling scrap iron to a very unhappy group of people.

Frank: You mean to the Japanese?

Mr. Lerner: Yeah, oh yeah. We sold a lot of it. People who live right here in Lexington and Huntington, it wasn't their fault, they were permitted to sell it and Japan was buying it wherever they could get it. The United States put an embargo on selling to Japan and that's why the Japanese, not ambassadors, they were committees that came to Washington to get the embargo lifted and they were in Washington when Pearl Harbor was attacked. They did not know it either. The Sunday afternoon of December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941, I was bowling in a B'nai Brith league owned by the father of Alex Schonbaum who was the Shoney's guy. He was an all American football player, Ohio State, very fine family. I was very close to them. Of course everybody realized that lightning had struck the outhouse.

On September 1, 1939 the young lady who I was very fond of came from Rhode Island to visit her family in Huntington. We had a date on Saturday night (September 1) and we went to dinner and a movie. We went out to a lovely place over a park where you could see the lights and everything. We were up there at 11 o'clock listening to the radio when CBS broke in to say the armies of the Third Reich have entered Poland in violation of the non-aggression pact with Russia. September 1, 1939, that was Tuesday. I saw an article in the paper this week and it reminded me of that incident.

When I heard that my girlfriend and I got serious. We were engaged the following March and married the following August. We knew fellows I went to school with went to Canada to enter the Royal Canadian Air Force. They wanted to get into the action as soon as possible. I wanted to go to OCS (officer candidate school) but my wife was pregnant and my family talked me out of going into the service early. And, I got in the service later.

Frank: Why did you want to go in the service early?

Mr. Lerner: Well, I'm a red blooded American.

Frank: So you wanted to show your honor to your country.

Mr. Lerner: America gave us, my family an awful lot and I felt obligated to give back. I went in and did what I had to do. We went over, we got to a place called Chabua and there had been a fighting force called Merrill's Marauders, they were the elite fighting force in China. They did a good job and they were plumb worn out and they were taken out of battle. When they had their rest for a month or six weeks, General Stilwell put them back into service and they just went AWOL (absent without leave) all over the world and Stilwell was gigged on that. He did a bad thing.

Well, we took over Merrill's Marauder's headquarters, in Myitkyina, until we had gone over into Burma. Then we went up to Mishinau and we built this airstrip to alleviate the heavy traffic that was there. We built a pretty good strip up there and

did it pretty quickly. We had a good outfit, 815 people in our battalion and we had some very good engineers, technicians.

I was in the battalion headquarters. Colonel Bench saw my skills and he wanted me there and he used me pretty well. I was invited to be the assistant chaplain and I turned it down because I was very busy and I did not want to be involved in other people's personal affairs.

We had an experience that was very sad. A fellow that was a friend of mine was in our supply division and we got a telegram from the red cross that his son had died, six or seven year old son that lived in Niagara Falls and I had to go tell him. I've seen grown men cry. We helped him get back to the states and he never came back.

After building that airstrip we went ninety miles south to a place called Bhamo, Burma and we built a smaller strip for fighter planes. That's where Rabbi Blumenthal came to visit with our outfit. We built that and in the meantime the war is winding down in Europe and Hitler's days were numbered. We were not given a new assignment but part of our assignment was to maintain a certain part of the Burma road. Maybe 30, 40 miles I don't know exactly what it was, which we did. We had no actual combat. We had air raids.

I was transferred to the headquarters of the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force, which at that time was in Kunming. Then we moved to a place called Luchow. There are three Luchow's in China. This one was 90 miles north of Amoy in the South China Sea. We were living in the jungle, I don't know what you call it, it wasn't a desert but it was a desolated area. The Japanese had been there and destroyed the city because there was a Chinese military school there. They just wanted to let them know who was boss. I hired several of these natives and we were in the monsoon area and I hired several to build brick foundations for our tents and our offices and everything. It was quite an experience. This was about June and July of about 1945.

Frank: What was your rank at that time?

Mr. Lerner: I was a sergeant, an enlisted man. We were getting our rations out of Kunming. They were getting flown in everyday or every other day. Every few days we didn't have any rations. We got used to it. We were very upset because the war ended in Europe in June but the Japanese part of the war went on for quite a while. I was walking to the mess hall on the first of August in 1945 and I stopped by the communications shack where I was employed. There was a TWX there that's telegraph, that the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force will provide fighter cover for MacArthur's invasion of South China. I tell you this was one unhappy camper because I knew that if that took place there would be quite a long part of the war left and tremendous casualties. I read not long ago one of the general historians estimated that if MacArthur had landed there and gone up across the water to

Japan we would have had 150,000 to a half million casualties and we didn't need that. The reason that I remember the date is that August 1<sup>st</sup> was my birthday and that was not my birthday card that I wanted.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August there was a telegram that came into our office. I was in communications and that is why I got these things right away, that a bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. Well, we were dropping bombs everyday all over Japan wherever Japanese soldiers were and we didn't know what the bomb was. Then, later that evening one of our newscasts told us that it was the atomic bomb. It created a tremendous amount of loss of life and devastation. The Japanese were asked before the bomb was dropped to surrender unconditionally. They would not do that. So my friend and buddy, President Truman authorized the drop of the bomb and asked for unconditional surrender and they refused. So on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Everybody knew that lightning had struck the outhouse and it was a couple of days that the emperor of Japan had kept himself aloof of the war and he felt that he was a god or a deity. Then he called group of people together and they arranged for a surrender. The formal ceremonies took place on the *USS Missouri* I think the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1945.

Well, the war was over and I thought now we'll get to go home. Wrong again. First place they were coming home from Europe and they didn't have enough ships to haul all these people. So our commanding general who had two general stars was a regular army man and he was wanting that third star. So, he volunteered the services of the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force to haul Chinese soldiers and mules, that's the way it was, from South China and Burma up to fight the communist threat in Mongolia.

Mr. Lerner: This is the lady that I have been married to for a long time.

Mrs. Lerner: 59 years.

Frank: That's wonderful.

Mrs. Lerner: Isn't that something.

Frank: You had mentioned that Harry Truman was your friend and buddy.

Mr. Lerner: He was.

Frank: How so?

Mr. Lerner: He was one of the greatest men I ever knew. He represented my thinking. He was a common man and like him, I just read the other day in the paper that there were nine presidents that did not go to college. He was one of the nine. I

didn't go to college either. Not because I was president but because we didn't have the money. I have figured out that without formal education I have been reading for many, many, many years. In fact right now I am reading the book, Shadow, about the five presidents since Nixon. I read only good stuff. I don't read novels and trash and that is one of the things that I'll recommend to you. I'll recommend two things when we are through and one of them is read, read, read because that is where your mind grows, grows, grows.

So we are assigned to deliver these soldiers and mules and I was one of the first 8 American soldiers in Shanghai. I was in the advanced echelon that got the headquarters started. We took over the Japanese imperial headquarters. The Japanese had not done hardly any damage to Shanghai. That was their showplace. They wanted to show people that we are not bad people here, look at Shanghai.

So, I had about 10 days of work, that's how long it took me I didn't know how long it was going to take and we got the headquarters set up and everything. Then I had an experience that was fantastic. In Shanghai there was an area called Hongkew. This was set up to take care of refugees and neutrals. They were put into a very crowded little area and the people from Europe who were going to China to go to Australia and Cuba and the United States they were trapped and they were living in Hongkew. I was not allowed to go there. I got special permission. When they saw a Jewish soldier they knew that things were going to get better. I met a couple of brothers there by the name of Rosen who had come from Warsaw, Poland and they were quarantined there. Real fine fellows. In fact they both died in the past few years. They had a yeshiva there called the Mir Yeshiva, which had to leave Poland, and either had to go to the United States and they were too late to make the decision. So they had to go east for that was their way to go to the United States. When the brothers found out that I had a two cousins from the United States at that yeshiva, if I had had a crown, I couldn't have been a bigger celebrity. I brought them cigarettes, candy, soap, and everything. There was a good book written by a fellow in Indianapolis, Carl Hepner. He was one of the refugees that lived there. Shanghai Express was the name of the book and I read that book too.

I spent a lot of time with them and the daughter of the head rabbi of the yeshiva was marrying one of the yeshiva students and I was probably the only outsider of Hongkew that was there. I had never seen a wedding like that before or since. It was 110% Orthodox at least. Well, they picked the bride up in the chair and holding the napkin with the groom and going around her seven times and the rabbi and his staff. Do you know what's a *sthreinel*? You've seen rabbis with fur pieces. That's called a *sthreinel*. They were all wearing those. They were very religious pious people. This yeshiva today is in Detroit and they stayed together and they are in Detroit as we speak. That was a tremendous experience.

Then I signed up to take a trip to Japan, just a sightseeing trip. In the evening before I went I got notice that the ship that I was going back on was in the harbor and we were leaving the next day. I didn't have any problem turning that trip down and I wouldn't go there for free. I am a human being. I have never seen such degrading of humanity as I saw in India. As I saw in China. I saw the burning ghats in India where they didn't have room to bury anybody. So the widow would light the pyre and throw the ashes into the Ganges. I saw people like Mother Theresa. In China, I was not in any city of any kind until I got to Shanghai. I guess there was sort of a deal that if a Chinese citizen died on the street for malnutrition or whatever, at 5 o'clock that evening they sent cars out all over the city, and Shanghai was a pretty big city. They picked them up and took them wherever they took them. If you died at 15 minutes after five tough luck buddy, you stayed there till the next day at five o'clock. When you see things like that then you think he had a soul, just like me. That is why I wouldn't go back there if they paid me 100 dollars an hour and paid me for free, I wouldn't go back to the Orient under any condition.

We left Shanghai on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, '45 and we got back to California December 7<sup>th</sup>. Just about a month later. Took us quite a while you see because there was a big shortage of ships and this ship that I was on was a fighting ship that had gotten damaged in one of the Pacific wars. One evening I was sitting on deck and the ship listed about 20, 22 degrees. I knew one of the sailors on the ship and I was telling him, "We went over a long way, what happened?" "This ship is crippled. We can't control it like we'd like to. If we had gone over 26 feet, we'd all be in the ocean." I mean that's a good pleasant experience to find out about.

We got back and I landed in California. Because my wife and little boy were living in Providence, I had the choice of being discharged at Fort Devens, it's right outside of Boston instead of coming back to Fort Thomas. Well, I took that it was the same thing but I had to wait a week and we would fly. I thought that that was the best deal for me. I talked to my wife everyday.

So we're flying back to Boston about the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> of December and that year the entire eastern half of the United States had the worst snow and ice storm they had ever had. Nobody could fly. We had to stop at Kansas City. Of course it was very cold and icy and we stayed overnight at Camp Leavenworth. Then the next day we went to Chicago by train and we went to Boston by train. We sat in Boston for two or three days and then I was discharged on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December. On that day there was 12 inches of snow, 12 inches of snow.

So I got a train and got back to Providence and Mrs. Lerner met me. When I left my little boy he was an infant and I come back and he was a little three-year old rascal. I had the best meal I'd ever had in my life that night. While we were eating Mrs. Lerner's mother of blessed memory suggested that we go down to the



hotel and have a little R&R. No complaints by me. So we went down to the hotel and nine months later we had a little girl. The day she was born in the maternity ward there were 54 children. There was an outbreak of dysentery and seven died. Thank God our little girl made it. She'll be 53 years old the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. She's having a very lovely party this weekend. Her son who is an attorney at Bowling Green is engaged to be married and they're having a big party of family of friends. Mrs. Lerner's brother and wife are coming in tonight and the only reason that I am going to temple is because of Yahrzeit for her father.

Frank: I'd like to go into a few more of the Jewish experiences you had in the military.

Mr. Lerner: I told you we had *seder* in Bhamo. That year, 1945, in Shanghai they had made arrangements to get a couple of big hangars out at the airport to have High Holy Day services. The chaplain in China was a gentleman by the name of Leonard Fine who has become quite an outspoken activist for the Reform Movement. I had no idea how many, I couldn't see how far there were people. There were some Chinese people there. I understand there were some Chinese Jews, but I didn't get to talk to them. I was just glad to go to services. Other than that, I was in Calcutta a couple of times but I never saw any Jewish. I know they had synagogues there but I was on a mission. I didn't have time to go anywhere.

Frank: Were there a lot of other Jews in the army with you?

Mr. Lerner: Oh yeah. We had 8, 10 Jewish boys in our outfit. I was very friendly with all of them. In fact, when we went overseas, we had a bridge game that we played bridge on the ship and there were three Jewish boys all named Leonard and a very fine not Jewish fellow named Bob Ward. It turned out that these three Leonards all had common acquaintances in New York. After service, Mrs. Lerner and I went to Huntington, well went to Rhode Island and on the way back, stopped in New York. This lady who was my wife's very close friend, and she still talks, and she talked to her last Saturday and the three Leonards and their wives all went out to dinner. It turned out that Leonard Kaufman was an attorney and Frank worked in the garment trade and I was in the furniture business and Al Spitz who had been a bombardier in Europe, he had several missions.

Now, going overseas we had High Holy Day services aboard ship. Ours wasn't the only, aboard ship we had 15,000 troops so there were Jewish boys in the other outfits on board ship. There was no rabbi there. One of the chaplains performed the service. He had a book and he could read out of it just like a rabbi would. They had services and I told you about the *seder* I had.

Frank: Were you able to celebrate Shabbat at any time or any daily services at all?

Mr. Lerner: No, no. We were in the jungle. When we finished the airstrip at Bhamo, gorgeous morning, spring morning, about 6 o'clock in the morning we hear a rifle shot. Well, we all jumped out of bed, clothed and got our rifles and went over on

the other side of the airstrip. There was an ammunition dump and there was a young soldier there on guard duty and a tiger walked out of the jungle. He's got a carbine, which is the least accurate piece of artillery or guns that you could have and this leopard was walking toward him. He aimed and hit that leopard in the throat. If he hits the leopard in the head or body, the leopard would have killed them. The leopard was so life like that one of the fellows got the idea that there was two two-by-fours and they set that leopard up and he looks as alive in that picture as you do. One of the guys in my office took a color picture, which I still have.

Shabbat services were out of the question. Nobody had them in the jungle and that is where we were. We had two monsoons and you should never have to be in one. They are really bitter. That's as far as services is concerned.

I still have the little prayer book that the Jewish Welfare Board gave me when I went into service. I used to use it when I went on trips something to use on the plane. But then I started carrying this and I didn't need the other.

Frank: When you went to services for the holidays or Passover or just the fact that you were Jewish, did you encounter any barriers from the other troops?

Mr. Lerner: No. No we didn't. We really didn't have what you would call anti-Semitism. Everybody over there was over there for the same reason. I had an unusual experience. We were stationed in Spokane for quite a while from April till August. The supply sergeant was a fellow by the name of Sheldon Hardy. He was the fellow that lost the little boy. He was shacking up with a lady in Spokane. I didn't know him anymore then I knew you when you walked in. It was just that if I needed to change a shirt that was torn I went and got a new shirt. That's all that I ever had to do with him. We got aboard ship and we are both sitting there smoking a pipe and he likes to play chess and I knew how to play chess so we started playing chess and we got to be pretty friendly. One afternoon he said, "Lenny, I want to tell you something 'cuz I'm ashamed of this, but I want to tell you something. When I first saw you in Spokane, I don't know why I just made up my mind that I didn't like you worth a damn." Now, he didn't know me. I'm sure I have a Semitic face and he probably knew that I was Jewish, but he was not anti-Semitic because his boss was a fine Jewish guy from Augusta, Maine. But he told me, "Lenny, I don't know why it was one of those things." We got to be very friendly. We got overseas and he was our supply sergeant and we had a lot of communication then. When I got this, and then he told me once he said, "You have turned out to be one of the nicest guys in this whole outfit, I'm sorry at what happened." I said, "Sheldon it doesn't bother me worth a damn. We got 825 guys in this battalion and I have no objection to anybody." So when I came to tell him that his little boy died, he broke down, embraced me and it was a hell of an experience. I had no anti-Semitic, no comments, even.

When I was in Spokane, the USO had people from all faiths there, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant. One of the directors there was a gentleman by the name of Sid Jaffee who was an attorney from Chicago. He had very bad eyes and he was rejected for service. We got to be very good friends. I met a fellow there who was a volunteer married to a lovely lady, Jewish, and she was from Covington, Kentucky. So when I said Huntington, West Virginia, we were over there for dinner a few times. They had two sons who were too young for service but we have been in contact three or four times.

But I never encountered any of that. I never denied my Judaism. People in my tent there were four. One was Jewish from Boston, one was from St. Louis and one was from Fort Collins, Colorado. The boy from St. Louis his name was Stedingk, never saw the name before or since, Carl. I didn't have it, I am sure it was there, but I didn't have it.

Frank: I know in some of my research so far the JWB expressed concern that they did a better job of sending chaplains and supplies and was more help to the Jews in the European theatre but not so much in the Pacific theatre.

Mr. Lerner: Not true, we had a chaplain. In fact, it so happens I knew him and it gave me a lot of connections as far as...I didn't need it but I had it. You wouldn't remember the name Gene Kelly, not the actor. But there was a fellow from Huntington named Gene Kelly, 6 foot 6 and a half inches tall Jewish boy, his original name was Sims. He had a marvelous radio voice sort of like Grand McNamer, who you wouldn't remember either. But in 1950, he had been employed to call the baseball games for the Philadelphia Phillies and that was the year the Philadelphia Phillies was called the whiz kids. Gene, a very good friend was the announcer for the world series. He was in Chabua. He was overseas and he had gone over early and his outfit, 90% got malaria. When I had first met him he had just gotten out of the hospital. He was quite involved with the Jewish part of it. Then he later came up to Bhamo. In service they had what they called the Armed Services Radio Service. Well, Gene was in charge of one of those. It was an octagonal 20 feet across. He slept there, he ate there and he was there all the time. Had two incidents with him that were quite unusual.

The only USO show that I saw when I was in service for almost three years was Lily Pons and Andre Kostelanetz. They came to Bhamo and they had their little orchestra and they put on a beautiful show. Really I was thrilled. The only one I saw and to be that far away from civilization was beautiful. By five o'clock that afternoon I got a call from Gene. He said, "Lenny, what are you doing?" I said, "Nothing. What's up?" He said, "I want you to come over." The name of this armed forces radio station was Radio Shack that is where the guy got the name, he was in communication. He said, "Come over to the shack at about a quarter to six. I have something I want to show you. I said, "OK." I walked over about three or four blocks. I get over there and he tells me that he is going to have an interview with Lily Pons and Andre Kostelanetz. Oh that's beautiful. So they

came there and then General Davidson who was our commanding general and his aide came there. Then another fellow came in and his name was Lord Louis Mountbatten and his aide. He was Southeast Asian commander and he flew in in his own little plane. I met all of them and shook hands with them and I got everyone of them to sign a card about like that. I got them to autograph it for me. I showed it to Mrs. Lerner and I can't find it I don't know where it is and I think one day I'll find it. That was something.

Did you ever hear the name Fred Friendly? Fred Friendly was a genius in radio and television. At an early age he had written a radio program in Providence, Rhode Island, 'The Sands of Time.' Margie was Fred in your confirmation class, the year before or later.

Mrs. Lerner: Before. He was a year older than me.

Mr. Lerner: He was living in Providence at the time. He was called into service and went into service and he was assigned to "Stars and Stripes." That was the service paper that was put out in different parts of the world with local interest. He was with Patton's army. When Patton entered Berlin and this was the first time that anybody could report on the concentration camps. Fred was right there. He was selected to come to the CBI, that was the name, China, Burma, India that was our designation. He was designated to come and tell the story of the concentration camps. His mother lived in Providence. His mother's friend lived next door to Mrs. Lerner's mother. Between the connection he found out where I was and he called me. He was coming to tell the story. He had a free evening and he and Gene Kelly and I got together at the Radio Shack. I had gotten a package from Mrs. Lerner, a care package as I called it. We had a couple of beers and we had some fun and food and we just had a nice evening. Fred went on to be a professor emeritus at Columbia University. He is considered one of the founding fathers of public radio and public television. He has done many commentaries and many documentaries on mostly Jewish things. He died last year. He was written up in the Washington Post, the New York Times and all over. After the war was over we used to go to Providence to see her dad, her mother died shortly after the war. On the way back we would stop in New York. I called him one time and asked if we could take he and his wife out to dinner and he said, "No Lenny. I am producing a TV show but you and Margie come over I would like you to see it." The TV, we didn't even have TV in Huntington at the time. He had a show Bob Trout who was a CBS News correspondent in Europe with Edward R. Murrow just like that. Fred Friendly did an album with Edward R. Murrow, "You Can Hear It Now," with the speech by Roosevelt, Churchill and people of that category. The panel consisted of Sir Cedric Hardwick, John Cameron Swayze and Dorothy Kilgallen; three very outstanding people and Fred introduced us to all of them. It was a good show and he said, "Maybe we can get together for a drink sometime." We were never able to get together. There were a couple of fellows in Huntington that were real good radio people and I thought that they were stifled. I wrote asked him if he would take my word for it that these boys

were good. I got a very nice letter from him. He was president of CBS News during the Kefauver Hearings. Mrs. Lerner worked for one of the men called her to do some calling. You were not born yet I don't think. As president of CBS news this was great news and he was running it on CBS. After about a week or ten days the president of CBS saw that they were losing money and they were not getting all the commercials paid for and everything, so he suggested that Fred cut it back or cut it out or do whatever. He said, "No this is news and this is the American public. I can't do that." So this guy fired him. The president of CBS fired him. His salary at that time, this was in 1968. The salary in 1968 was 100,000 dollars and he gave that up. That's the kind of guy he was. He wrote a book, which I read in Hawaii in 1969, and that is the reason that I remember the date was Due to Circumstances Beyond My Control. He tells the whole story. He wrote another book about the supreme court of Minnesota. We had some big Jewish people in the army. I just read an article yesterday in fact the article is downstairs, what happened to the ship *St. Louis* you know that story.

Frank: Yes.

Mr. Lerner: That Eleanor Roosevelt begged FDR to allow these refugees in and he turned them down. They had an anti-Semitic son of a bitch by the name of Breckenridge who was Secretary of State. He said, "No we won't do this." So they didn't.

Frank: Where did you serve, what did you do in the military?

Mr. Lerner: My MOS I was a clerk typist. I took care of all of our courts martial. I took care of correspondence for Colonel Bench and whatever he did. I cut orders for army regulation purposes. Did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism during the war or have any expectations? I very much concerned myself with practicing Judaism and I don't know what you mean by expectations? Did I expect that they would let me or not let me?

Frank: You would have the opportunity to be able to practice.

Mr. Lerner: I made the opportunity. There was no...if so how did you practice it. I think I told you that.

Frank: You did, you did.

Mr. Lerner: Did you encounter any barriers within it? No. Did you experience any anti-Semitism during the service? No sir.

I was very active in Jewish community affairs in Huntington, West Virginia. I told you I was secretary of our synagogue in 1937. I went away and came back and served and we came back in '46. In 1941 I was the youngest president of B'nai Brith, of a major lodge in the United States the youngest president 1940 and

'41. I was nominated for vice president in May and then our president was on naval reserve and he was called up and I was made president immediately. In 1947 I was on the board of the synagogue, the temple, the federated charities, and the four Jewish organizations which was stupid. But I wanted to get back in the swing of things. I was on the original board for the Red Cross Blood Center in Huntington. I was on the board for the Blood Institution. I signed up more blood donors than anybody in Huntington. I went to the C&O Railroad who had an office there also had a hospital and I approached the manager and I told him I was with the Red Cross and we were recruiting blood donors for the city and the area. A very arrogant guy said, "We don't need any blood donors. We have a hospital." He stumped me, I didn't know what to say. I reported back and the fellow at the Red Cross said, "Why don't you and I go back tomorrow." We went back and the Red Cross guy said, "You could have two hospitals but if you don't have blood coming into those hospitals you are going to have a lot of dead people for nothing." I signed up 950 people right then and there. It was a good experience. I gave blood before March 15, 1951 I gave blood out at the veterans administration and they sent me a check, they were paying. I said, "No I don't take any money." "Oh no. You have to take it. That's the army rules." So I endorsed it over to the Red Cross. Then I didn't go back. I started giving blood in March '51 and we were allowed to give every three months. Then they relaxed it a bit and said that you were allowed to give five times a year I gave 7 gallon there and four gallon here. Then I had heart surgery in '82 and I had to quit then. I was president of Civitan in Huntington and I was the only Jewish person at Civitan when I became president.

Frank: Civitan is a ....

Mr. Lerner: Small service organization and a good one. We had one major project. We through our wives we checked the hearing of school children. We bought the audiological equipment and our ladies conducted the tests and where we found that a youngster needed a hearing aid or needed an operation or something, we took care of all that, civitan. The program got so good that after three years the board of education took it over and gave it to all the schools and we were very proud of that. That was a good deal.

I've had very, very little...I was present when some anti-Semitic remarks were made. When I was president of B'nai Brith we went to Providence and went to back to New York. I went to the Anti-Defamation League. I was asked to testify against two subversive people that we had in our area and I did. I gave that to the Anti-Defamation League in May of 1941. When Pearl Harbor occurred, all of the accumulated data that the ADL had was given over to the FBI.

I graduated high school we had 314 people in our class. I was treasurer of that class. Year before last I went back to Huntington. I mc'd our reunion after 63, 64 years. We had a wonderful Jewish community in Huntington. We had two congregations that now have merged to one congregation. But at the time as I

APPENDIX B  
Leonard A. Lerner

said I belonged to both and was on the board of both. When Rabbi Danzinger was unable to officiate and in fact he died shortly there after. Rabbi Ted Levy from the temple came over and conducted services for us. He officiated at our funerals until we got another rabbi. He was ordained and was installed in our temple in Huntington about 1951. This name should ring your bell and the name is Solomon Freehoff.

Frank: Sure, absolutely.

Mr. Lerner: He was Rabbi Levy's rabbi in Pittsburgh and he came to Huntington to install him. Rabbi Heschel was here as a forum speaker. I saw Rabbi Steven Wise come to our art series in Huntington in 1933. I'm Jewish.

## Herbert H. Paper

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Herbert H. Paper conducted on November 9, 1999 at his residence at 3172 S. Farmcrest, Cincinnati, OH 45213.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

Dr. Paper: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on January 11, 1925. My parents came to America right after World War I from a little town in Poland. My father came first. He had served in the Polish Army. He came to America with an older brother who had been in the Russian Army who had been present at the war in Germany during World War I. My mother came with her family two years later and my father they came from the same time. And then my father and mother were married in 1923. I was born in 1925.

We kept a *kosher* kitchen in our home, but my parents were not Sabbath observers. In fact in 1931, my father opened a bakery in Baltimore. The bakery was open seven days a week. My father's father, my grandfather who lived in Baltimore, was a very Orthodox Jew. And my mother's father, who lived in New York was also very Orthodox. We used to visit them, the family in New York, every Pesach.

When I was six years old ready to go to school, my parents sent me, in Baltimore, to an Orthodox day school. It was one of the few outside of New York City. It was founded in 1916. The rabbi who came from Russia who was the principal of that school was principal for fifty years. It was a school that went through the seventh grade. And the daily schedule was 9 to 3 with an hour off for lunch and a ten-minute break here and there. Nine to three were all the Judaic subjects and 3:15 to 5:30 were secular subjects. Then I had an hour streetcar ride home. We thought it was great because the education was better. It didn't compare in any way to what our friends and my cousins did in their local Hebrew schools. The teachers of the Judaic subjects were all from Europe and everything was translated into Yiddish because they didn't know much English. We spoke Yiddish at home too, so I had no problem. When I was about nine years old I began studying Talmud. We first translated the prayerbook, then the Bible, and Rashi, and Talmud and so forth and so on.

Now, when I finished the seventh grade, a group of us out of this class were selected and given a six-week summer program. Then we were admitted into the ninth grade in a public high school. It was an all boy public high school; a very good school in Baltimore called Baltimore City College. After you got out of school at 2:30, you went downtown back to school to study Talmud. I did this for a couple of years, then I did something else.



But our family celebrated all of the holidays. The bakery was closed the whole week of Pesach and all the other holidays. In fact, across the street from us there was an Orthodox synagogue where we used to go.

Then, in 1939, the summer of '39, the beginning of my senior year in high school, my parents moved to Denver, Colorado. My father opened a bakery there. But that bakery was closed on Saturday. Not because my parents were so Orthodox, but that's the way it was in Denver in that neighborhood. I graduated high school in 1940 and I was only 15 and 1/2 years old because I had skipped two grades, the eighth grade and the second grade.

Then I got a tuition scholarship to go to Yeshiva College in New York for one year. I couldn't take it. The Orthodoxy there was sickening because most of the fellows who were in that class were there to avoid the draft.

Then I left after that one year and I went to the University of Colorado, which is 25 miles north of Denver. I started my sophomore year there in September of '41. Then in December came Pearl Harbor. Then the Draft Act and everything else so I knew I was going to get drafted. So I went two summers and took an extra course every term. I majored in Latin and Greek because it was my ambition in life to be a high-school Latin teacher.

The day I graduated from University of Colorado, I was drafted into the army. Now I was actually drafted three weeks before when I passed my physical. But on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, the day of my graduation, my father drove me out to Fort Logan, Colorado. And I was in the army. Then I spent twelve weeks in basic training in Fort Benning, Georgia, the infantry. And while I was there I took two examinations to qualify for one of the war time intensive language courses. During World War II, the army had a lot of intensive language courses all over the country on university campuses and I knew about them. And I wanted to do Russian, I forget why. So when I survived the twelve weeks of basic, and I mean survive, my orders came through.

With eight other fellows from my battalion, we crossed the country by train to Berkeley, California. By the way, I must say, up until Pearl Harbor less than ten universities in America taught Chinese or Japanese. Berkeley was always a main center for these things. So they told us a few days later that we would study Chinese. So, for one whole year, 25 of us were in this intensive course in Chinese. At the end of which we were totally fluent. Now the army's requirements for Chinese, wherever it was taught, in this intensive fashion, only speaking and understanding, no reading and writing. But in our class, by a local accident, we also learned the Chinese characters. By the end we knew how to read newspapers.

Then when we finished our course orders came through. For a reason that was never explained to us, twelve of us out the 25, including me, were sent in

December '44 to Fort Riley, Kansas, where they put us in a basic training battalion with a bunch of rookies in the horse cavalry. The stupidest thing you could possibly imagine. You can't imagine how stupid. Then when we survived that, I mean survived, because when we went on bivouac toward the end of the basic training we were out in the snow for two weeks with the horses and we slept in the snow. We prayed for pneumonia, but couldn't catch a sniffle. Now I had never been on a horse before and I've been on a horse five times since. In any event, when we survived that business, they sent us to a small camp in Northern Maryland where we were given excellent training in what they called military intelligence interpreting. We were all privates first class. Then we went through a process of various camps.

At the end of July '45, thirty of us trained officially as Chinese interpreters, all privates first class, boarded a troop ship in New York harbor. None of us had been out of the U.S. before. We sailed for 28 days to Calcutta. A week before we got to Calcutta, the war ended. So they wouldn't send us to China and I spent the next eight months in Calcutta working in an army finance office. Then I came home and I was discharged from the army in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in the middle of May 1946. Then I started graduate school in the fall at University of Chicago. I majored in linguistics and ancient languages and so forth.

Frank: When you were in the military did you concern yourself with practicing Judaism?

Dr. Paper: Well, when we were off any time on a Friday night for services, I used to go, but it wasn't very often. In fact, when I came home from overseas, we boarded a troop ship at Calcutta, the first night of Passover. And a couple of days later, there was a Jewish chaplain on board. He had a kind of a Passover service. And I never ran into any anti-Semitism in the army. I was in the army almost three years. But there were all kinds of occasions for Jewish practice whether it was a Friday night service or a holiday service. Like when I got to Calcutta it was about three weeks before *Rosh Hashanah*. I got a three day pass to go in from this camp. I was forty miles north of Calcutta. It was a little nowhere camp. I came into Calcutta and there were services held for Jewish troops. There was a Jewish chaplain and lots of Jewish troops from both the British and American armies. The first evening of *Rosh Hashanah* there was a huge airplane hangar open at both ends. It was used by the army for showing movies and all kinds of entertainment. That was used for services. There must have been over 3000 troops plus some civilians at services. They were fabulous. So, wherever there was any opportunity, ok, fine. Than in Calcutta, we were often invited to a big beautiful synagogue that was built by a great wealthy Jewish family there for Friday night services.

Frank: What about during your basic training days?

Dr. Paper: There was hardly any...I don't recall any chaplain at Fort Benning or any services.

Frank: Did you have any interaction with other Jewish soldiers?

Dr. Paper: Yeah. There were Jewish soldiers in my units, in my platoon, in my battalion, in my company. Sure, from all over.

Frank: Then traveling around?

Dr. Paper: In the country, right. I remember when I was in Fort Benning once there was a notice in the local USO on a certain Sunday afternoon when you had a day off Sunday, there was a picnic and something by the Jewish Welfare Board at a park in Columbus, Georgia. Then in Calcutta, every once in a while there was something special for Jewish soldiers. It was a different world. You didn't really expect it every week or every day.

I remember the first time once at a service on a Friday night. I forget where it was, at Benning or at Fort Riley. It was a Friday night service and the chaplain was a conservative rabbi. And at the service they read the Torah and I asked him about it after the service. He said, well we don't have a chance Saturday morning so we do it Friday night. Look, you learn about adaptation to various kinds of situations.

Frank: Sure. The Reform movement does that now at a lot of places.

Dr. Paper: Oh, ok.

Frank: Whether it's good or bad. So, you gave me examples of how you practiced it. You had services on occasion.

Dr. Paper: We got off sometimes for a holiday and we could go to services.

Frank: You mentioned growing up that you had kept a *kosher* house. Did you keep *kosher* at all when you were in the military?

Dr. Paper: No. There was no way. There was no way.

Frank: Even *kosher* style?

Dr. Paper: There was no way. In fact, I was introduced to eating non-*kosher* food early on in my life. I remember the first time I ever ate a non-*kosher* hot dog. A group of us in Baltimore, who were students at this Orthodox day school, went to see the Orioles play. We took along our mitts and we loved the Orioles. They were then the International League. The guy that was selling hot dogs kept going by and they smelled so good. We decided we would try it. We took our first bite and the world didn't come to an end.

Look, these are adaptations to different situations. Once on *Yom Kippur*, I must have been about 11 or 12 years old. On *Yom Kippur* afternoon, I came across from this Orthodox synagogue next to our house. First of all there was the bakery and then behind the kitchen and we lived upstairs. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon and I come into the kitchen. Then there was my father and some of his friends, who all came from the same little town in Poland. They're sitting there and they're eating! I said, "But it's *Yom Kippur*!" One of the men said to me, I'll never forget this. He said, "During World War I when we were under German occupation, we hungered so much that we fasted enough for the rest of our lives." A different experience.

Frank: That's very interesting. Do you remember any other experiences of practicing your Judaism or in communication with other soldiers?

Dr. Paper: No. I knew various Jewish soldiers. In this Chinese course I was in there were a number of Jewish soldiers. One of them we were referring to, still a very good friend. He was from Rochester, New York. He ended up in the Philippines when I ended up in Calcutta. After the war, he went to JIR [Jewish Institute of Religion]. He didn't want to be a rabbi. He just wanted to study. In '48 he got married and he moved to Israel. Anyway, he was working and a couple of years later he went back to school at the university and he majored in Far Eastern studies because the background we had was unbelievable. He got his Ph.D. and he was appointed to the faculty at the Hebrew University and he was in their Far Eastern Studies Department for many years. He retired a couple of years ago and he kept up his Chinese and published all kinds of works on Modern Chinese History and so forth. Every time we are in Israel we see him and we reminisce.

In fact, when I went to graduate school in Chicago and majored in linguistics, various languages, I debated with myself. Maybe I should stay in Chinese studies. One of my classmates that was also from that course, a Jewish boy from Chicago and he decided that he still had a semester to go to get his BA so he transferred his major to Chinese. He went on for an MA hoping to get a Ph.D. It turned out he knew Chinese better than the professor of Chinese who couldn't speak the language. And the professor of Chinese took a dislike to him. So, when he got his MA, the professor wouldn't let him go on for a Ph.D. So he got a job in Washington in the Department of External Intelligence of the State Department. And he had a fantastic career because he could speak it. He could read it. It was unbelievable.

Frank: How would you categorize your military experience. Was it positive?

Dr. Paper: I think it was positive. I mean there were some negative aspects, too like that horse cavalry thing, two basic trainings. But in general, I would say that it was very positive because of the people I got to know and the places I was in and the things I studied. When we were at Berkeley, we studied not only about China, but took courses in history, political science, geography, and anthropology of the

whole Far Eastern South Asia which was a relatively unknown part of the world for most people. And the people who taught those classes were some of the greatest scholars in the world in these fields. It was simply magnificent to be at their feet and to hear them talk about India, Japan, and China. It was fabulous. From that point of view, it was a very interesting experience.

Of course when I got to Calcutta, that was also interesting. It was negative in many ways because of the poverty and the human misery you saw in the street everyday, but there was nothing we could do about that. But it was interesting introduction to part of the world.

Frank: You said you left the military from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Dr. Paper: Yeah. Of course I lived in Colorado and so you left the service in the area of the country where you lived and I went home to Denver.

Frank: You started practicing Judaism how you did before you left?

Dr. Paper: That's right. My father was a member of a local Orthodox synagogue near-by.

Frank: Do you have anything else you want to add?

Dr. Paper: Well, you can ask whatever you want. But I never experienced any kind of anti-Semitism. In fact, this was unusual. When I was in the army, I always wrote letters in Yiddish to my parents. One day I wrote to my father because my father was an everyday subscriber to the Yiddish Forward, first in Baltimore then in Denver. In Denver we got it by mail from Chicago. I used to read it all the time. Of course there was news in there you never saw anywhere else, even in the English newspaper. So in the letter I said to him, Daddy, get me a subscription to the Forward. He knew the manager of the Forward in Chicago. He had been the manager in their plant in Baltimore. When they closed that down they moved him to Chicago. So my dad wrote him a letter and the man remembered my father. He said, I want a subscription for my son. Here's his army address for the Forward. Tell me how much it's going to cost and I'll pay it. So, he got a letter back saying your son is in the army and he'll get it for free. So it came in the mail. I remember being on bivouac and the sergeant was handing out the mail and he always threw the paper to me because no one else was going to get it. It was just one of those things.

Frank: Out of the people I've interviewed you're the second person, maybe the third person who had absolutely zero anti-Semitic experiences.

Dr. Paper: Wherever I was whether there was a Jewish chaplain or whether we had services and we got off.

Frank: Most other people who had some sort of anti-Semitic experience, it was very mild. There was nobody who had a really horrible experience.

Dr. Paper: There was something else that always struck me and I remember. Before World War II, there were very few Jewish professors that you could look to as role models. There was an occasional physicist or a mathematician. You never heard of others. That's why I wanted to be a high-school Latin teacher. And there were many schools, certainly Ivy League Schools, where there were quotas on Jewish students. As a result of World War II and the GI Bill, when I went to the University of Chicago in September of '46 because of the GI Bill, the university's enrollment went from 2000 to 8000. And I lived in a dormitory, a building that had been a Jewish orphanage that the university had bought and re-equipped. I lived for two years in a room with eight double-decker bunks, fifteen roommates, and we totally had a big study hall. We could eat anywhere. These guys had been everywhere. We had bull sessions about the world. Army, navy, marines, everywhere in the world. In fact there was one fellow who went to law school who went in on D-Day to Omaha Beach. Compared notes and all that, you know, told stories and so forth and so on. When the first Ph.D.'s began coming out '50, '51, '52 and the colleges were expanding, they were hiring anybody with a Ph.D. no matter what they were. Could anyone have imagined in the late '30's and early 40's, that today the presidents of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Dartmouth, and God knows what else were all Jews? It was unimaginable. Or the growth of Jewish studies in the universities. It was unimaginable. And then also another thing that happened because of World War II, if you were a dean or a department chairman and you were an anti-Semite, you couldn't show it publicly because of the whole World War II thing. You might do it privately, but you couldn't do it publicly.

Frank: Do you think that's the result of one the Holocaust was taking place or two because the fact that the Jews in the American Army were in the front lines fighting?

Dr. Paper: No. I think it had to do with the whole negative attitude toward anti-Semitism because of the whole German and European experience.

Frank: Didn't have anything to do with the fact that Jews were willing to fight for their country?

Dr. Paper: I don't think so. I have a first cousin in Baltimore. We grew up together. He is about three years older than me. He went into the army and became an officer in the Combat Engineers. He was in every campaign of the U.S. Army across North Africa, Sicily, Italy, went into Southern France, went into Germany. He was among the first troops to go into Dachau. He rarely spoke about it. Some years ago he was interviewed on this TV thing that the Jewish War Vets put out. Interviewed with him early on when he went into Dachau. Then they interviewed him many years later about his experience. He was only one of a great many. I'm

always grateful that in despite the large amount of combat training I was given, I was never in combat and I didn't have to serve in Europe to see all that stuff that came after the war, into the camps and so forth and so on. The only combat I ever saw was when I was in Calcutta November '45, we were confined to our camp for a whole week because there were anti-British riots because of something that happened there and we were confined to our camp. They used to march by, the Congress Party from Gandhi's people used to march by our camp. They knew we were Americans, we were in the middle of town and not British. They used to march by and chant "Quit India!" which was the chant for the British. Finally, we used to chant back, "Give us ships!" Once in February of '46 we read in the paper that Mahatma Gandhi was going to be in a small town just north of Calcutta speaking to his people. So my lieutenant who was Jewish, we worked in this office, he got a jeep and we drove out there and we were the only Americans among about 30, 40 thousand people sitting and hearing Gandhi speak. That was a very interesting experience.

Frank: A lot of interesting experiences.

Dr. Paper: Oh sure. I've met people at my age who remember World War II and when I say I was in India they say, the American Army was in India? They have no memory of that. It wasn't a major theater of war, but there were plenty of troops. At first in the early part of the war they fought in Burma, General Stilwell, Eastern India. And then of course from India they flew over to China. We were presumably going to be interpreters for American staff officers working with Chinese troops or else helping train Chinese troops because they didn't know how to speak the language.

Frank: Interesting.

Dr. Paper: Yes. It was fascinating. In fact, I found out when I was living in this dorm in Chicago comparing notes with all of these guys who had been in the army and navy and what not. My 54 days at sea to and from India I had spent more time at sea than some of the guys who had been in the navy. Look. You can never predict what's going to happen, whether army or not army.

Frank: Absolutely.

Dr. Paper: You can't predict.

Frank: You can try.

Dr. Paper: I've always looked back on it as a fascinating experience. In fact when I got my Ph.D. in August '51, I later got a letter from the veteran's administration telling me that I still have a day-and-a-half eligibility for education from the GI Bill. How I did it in five years I'll never know.

Frank: Wow. I don't actually have any more questions.

Dr. Paper: No, no, please. Whatever, if you have more questions.

Frank: I wish that I did.

Dr. Paper: As I say, my army experience was a very positive one in general except for that horse cavalry thing. It was so stupid.

Frank: You got into the military because you were drafted.

Dr. Paper: Yes, I was drafted. In fact before I went in, you couldn't enlist. You could only go in when you were drafted.

Frank: Is that because of your location?

Dr. Paper: No, no, no. In general, there were no enlistments. In fact when I went through my physical in early August after you passed the physical; you went into a room with several officers sitting there. They wanted to put me in the navy. I said, "No, no. I want this intensive language program in the army." One of them said, "We'll teach you a dirty language." I said, "That's ok."

You were selected in those at the time you were drafted for the army, navy, or marines. The airforce was part of the army. It was whole different situation.

Frank: I know of a lot of people who were going to be drafted but they enlisted beforehand.

Dr. Paper: That was maybe in '42. At the time I went in there was no enlistment then.

Frank: You could only be drafted.

Dr. Paper: About six months before Pearl Harbor, the navy realized that it needed Americans to defeat the Japanese other than American Japanese. So they started a course at Berkeley and they began a class that was about a year long. At the end of which they could speak, read, and write Japanese and understand Japanese. They became officers. Then after Pearl Harbor when the Japanese relocation took place, most of the teachers in this were Japanese; they moved that school to Boulder where I was an undergraduate. You heard Japanese around you and saw it on blackboard in classrooms. I met some people who were in that class. I decided I think maybe that's what I want to do. One day I went to see this lieutenant commander who recruited people for this. Now, to get into that Japanese course, you had to have two things, aside from being physically qualified. You had to be a college graduate and a Phi Beta Kappa, which meant you were a good student because it was a very heavy program. So one day I went to see this officer. I had just made Phi Beta Kappa two months before I got my



BA. I went to see him. I said, "I took languages, and I made Phi Beta Kappa, I'm getting my BA soon." He looks at me and says, "How old are you?" I said "18 1/2." He said, "You have to be at least 20 to get commissioned." Now I knew a number of people in that program. You know professor Henry Winkler, now retired professor, President of University of Cincinnati, was in that course. And I knew a number of other people who were in that Japanese course. Some of them stayed in Japanese studies afterwards because whatever they were they transferred their interest into Japan because they could speak and read and write Japanese.

Then of course, the study of these parts of the world opened up because of World War II. So that you got it taught all over the place. Now-a-days you have high schools that teach Chinese and Japanese. That kind of thing you couldn't possibly imagine it existing before World War II: The whole expansion of these things. By the way, I said not ten universities taught Chinese. Not ten universities taught Russian or Arabic or Hebrew. And if they taught Hebrew, it was only Biblical Hebrew.

Frank: The world has opened up a lot since then.

Dr. Paper: Of course it's opened up a lot. I remember one day when I got out of the army, I was home in Denver the summer of '46. They were still training Chinese National Air Force people at Lowry Field in Denver. So one day I get off the bus in downtown Denver and I went across the street to get my streetcar out to the west side where I live. I get off the bus and on a main intersection in downtown Denver there are two Chinese Air Force Officers standing there in their uniforms holding a map looking very confused. I said to them in Chinese, "What are you looking for?" So they told me where they wanted to go. So I explained to them in Chinese how to get there. They thanked me and I walked away and across the street. I turn around and they're looking at me like this [mouths hanging down]. After I left they realized this was an American talking good Chinese. It was amazing.

Frank: That's what a good education will do for you.

Dr. Paper: That's right. I learned Persian afterwards. I learned to speak Persian living in this village. It's after I got my Ph.D. I was on a Fulbright in Iran. I spent 7 months in Iran, but I spent 5 months in this small village in Southern Iran with these four French archaeologists in a place called Shushan, an ancient Jewish site. There was no electricity, no running water, but the wife of the man in charge had a good system. Nobody spoke English, so every day my French improved and I learned to practice speaking Persian with the villagers. I learned to speak it well and I have a good accent. Of course I worked on it afterwards when I came back to the States. I taught Persian at Michigan many years. Whenever I meet a Persian, this has happened to me dozens of times, I'll start talking Persian. They'll look at me and say, "Oh. Your family comes from Persia. Of course where do you find anyone who knows how to speak the spoken language?" I say, "No. I

have no family connection." Do you know what they'll say next? "Oh, you work for the CIA." It's one of those things. Why should an American be able to speak this way? Every once in a while, all though I don't speak Chinese like I used to, I still have a good accent. I still speak some. Every once in a while I'll flabbergast a waiter or waitress at a Chinese restaurant. They don't believe it. But I say the course we had was just unbelievable. If I could speak Hebrew today the way I once spoke Chinese, I'd be very happy. Later on in this course when we were in Maryland, we learned a lot of Chinese military terminology like the things that are parts of weapons and so forth. It was a fascinating experience.

Frank: Again, I don't think I have any more questions.

Dr. Paper: Please. Finally, when I was in Calcutta, I kept getting promoted and ended as a tech sergeant although I had been a PFC for 27 months. On the day after I was promoted to tech sergeant, three weeks later I would have made master sergeant, but they closed promotions. They closed it in the whole theater.

Frank: You said you practiced Judaism when you could in the military. Did you have any expectations before you went in?

Dr. Paper: No, no. In fact there was a general notion that even Orthodox rabbis came out with that while you were in the army you could eat anything. You're in a very different situation. You were in a whole different situation.

Frank: You said adaptation.

Dr. Paper: Yes. There was a time when the Orthodox world before World War I in Europe, was able to adapt to a certain extent to the modern world which it hasn't been able to do, I mean the ultra-Orthodox. They're living in a Polish Shtetl where everybody lives close to a synagogue and so forth and so on. They have never been able to understand and make peace with modern technology. I remember reading about it years ago. Electricity for example. Rabbis thought about it, some rabbis, they worked on it and decided that you couldn't turn a switch on on Shabbas because if you turned it on there was a spark and that was making fire. That's nonsense. In Orthodoxy, why is it permissible, even years ago, you could carry a handkerchief stuck in your sleeve in your jacket, but you can't carry it in your pocket? Because, that's carrying on Saturday.

Frank: It doesn't make any sense.

Dr. Paper: Of course it doesn't make any sense. None of it makes any sense. We're living in a whole different world. We have been for a long, long time. Ask me some more questions.

Frank: I don't have any more. I'm going to turn this off.

[Tape turned off and then turned back on.]

Dr. Paper: Although I had a negative experience in the army, I had a lot of positive experiences. People I know, training, opening up the world, but it was kind of becoming an adult, growing up. I went in I was 18 and 1/2. When I came out I was 21.

Frank: When I was in Israel, I wrote a paper on the idea that in Israel you become an adult through the experience of the military and in America you become an adult through the experience of going to college. Back then it was different.

Dr. Paper: Look, whenever I hear anybody comment on the current situation and say, "When I was a student!" Who gives a damn? The world was different when you were a student when I was a student. When we were young. It was a different world, totally different.

We went out to eat dinner last night with a couple of good friends visiting from the Board of Governors. We went over to Graeter's down on Hyde Park Square. Whatever ice cream costs, about \$1.95. When I was a kid, ice cream cost a nickel. I remember in 1935 in Baltimore there were two daily newspapers and the price went up from only 2 cents to 3 cents and there was almost a revolution. You can't compare it.

I once told this to a senior, a bunch of older faculty members when I was teaching at Michigan. We were awarding a certain kind of fellowship they said, "When I came to Michigan the salary was \$3000." Who cares what it was in 1935! Those kinds of comparisons don't carry any weight whatever. When I went to the University of Colorado, I could barely afford it. There were three quarters plus a summer quarter. The tuition was a dollar-and-a-half a credit hour. So when I took eighteen hours, that was \$27 plus there was a medical fee and an athletic fee. So it came to about \$35 a quarter. That was a lot of money. But how can...I hear about the tuition, \$20,000. God knows what. It's impossible to imagine, but it's a whole different world.

## Ned Schneider

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Ned Schneider conducted on September 17, 1999 at his residence at 12488 Dawn Hill, Maryland Heights, MO 63043.

Mr. Schneider: I was raised in St. Louis in a predominantly German Catholic neighborhood. There were no *shuls* or temples or anything like that. I knew more about the Catholic Church across the street than I did about....I was never *Bar Mitzvahed*. I had two older brothers. My folks used to have a rabbi come in and try to teach them. I mean these are the stories that I heard because I was the youngest. One day my mom said something to this rabbi she said, "Why don't you start teaching him how to lay tefilin and so forth." He said, "What for? They'll probably lay on the ice box anyway." She said, "In that case you're wasting your time and you're wasting my money. So my two brothers were never *Bar Mitzvahed* either. Like I said I think I knew more about the Catholic Church across the street than I did....

I began to learn a little bit about Judaism. Well, we kept *kosher* and Jewish holidays in my house. But I began to learn more about Judaism when my mother passed away. My two brothers and I decided that we were going to say *Kaddish*. Of course none of us really knew [how]. My brother, at that time belonged to an Orthodox *shul* and his son was learning to be *Bar Mitzvahed*. Of course we'd get in there and these guys would start in with do this and do that and none of us knew what we were doing.

Frank: When was that?

Mr. Schneider: 1956. But in the year that I went as much as I could I did learn a little bit. Then we have two daughters. When the oldest one got to school age we decided that she was going to go and be confirmed.

Mrs. Schneider: I went to Hebrew school for many years. I was never *Bat Mitzvahed* and I was never graduated. But that's the way it was in those days. Girls didn't have those privileges.

Mr. Schneider: At that time we decided we would go to a reform temple. We wanted to join Shaare Emeth. They only had classes on Saturday and I worked on Saturdays. United Hebrew had Saturday and Sunday classes. We joined United Hebrew and we've been members ever since

Mrs. Schneider: And enjoy it.

Frank: In your upbringing at home, what did your father do before the war?

Mr. Schneider: He was a tailor. In later years he gave that up and just did alterations and ran a dry-cleaning shop. I worked with him in the dry-cleaning shop.

Mrs. Schneider: He was very well versed in Judaism. He knew everything by memory.

Mr. Schneider: I don't know if you're familiar with Cohen the *kosher* butcher here.

Frank: A little bit.

Mr. Schneider: When Mr. Cohen first came to this country he worked for a *kosher* butcher that my folks bought meat from. We lived up in North St. Louis. After my mother passed away Cohen used to come down to Krey Packing Company which was just a few blocks away from us. When he did that he used to call ahead of time to see if my dad needed any *kosher* meat and he'd bring it down. They always had a little bit of time to have a little drink and they would go over Torah portions. My dad was very well learned in Judaism. We lived in North St. Louis and there wasn't any *shul* around there. He just backed away from it, not that he didn't believe in it. My mother kept a *kosher* home all the time.

Frank: Did you do anything on Shabbat? Light candles at all?

Mr. Schneider: Oh yes. It wasn't held to the strictest but she bought *kosher* meat. She kept a *kosher* home. We owned the property where we lived and a Gentile family lived upstairs. There was a kid that lived up there that was my age. I used to try in the morning to eat breakfast as quick as I could because if I went and called Bill and he wasn't ready his mother would ask me if wanted some bacon and I'd go ahead and eat.

Frank: You kept a *kosher* home. You lit candles. What about Passover?

Mr. Schneider: We kept Passover. In fact, to this day, I don't know if you're familiar with Preston furniture over here in St. Charles, his name was Pesicoff before he changed it. His dad had a grocery store down in what we called the West End. We lived in North St. Louis and my folks came from the same town in Europe as his dad and mother. A few weeks before Passover she'd go over there and she'd order all the stuff she needed for Passover and he'd get it in a couple weeks. He'd have it ready and we'd pick it up. Everything was kept *kosher* at home. Like I say, we weren't schooled. We didn't bring in treif or anything. If I did it was kept in the store. On the holidays before I could drive we would go out in west St. Louis I don't know if you're familiar with Clara and Page and Union? We would take the streetcar and get off three or four blocks before the *shul* and we'd walk the rest of the way. My dad didn't like to drive. When I could drive we would do the same thing. We'd drive out and we'd park the car a few blocks away and we'd walk the rest of the way.

Mrs. Schneider: Well that was being respectful.

Frank: Well what about the military? When did you get into the military?

Mr. Schneider: I went in service in 1945. I was called first in '43 and I was rejected. The end of '44, that was about the time of the battle of the Bulge, they called me back and the second time I passed. I went in, in early '45 and I wound up in Japan. I was on the first ship to go directly from the United States into Japan. I stayed there until June of '46 and I got a dependency discharge because my dad was running the store by himself. His health wasn't that great. You know how I got the discharge? I needed three letters to prove that he was having a rough time. One of his customers, a Gentile sent a letter, the doctor sent a letter in, and the priest from the catholic church across the street sent a letter in that I worked with Dad and he could see that he could use my help. That's how I got out.

Mrs. Schneider: Also Ned's mother was sick too.

Mr. Schneider: Yes, she was sick too. When I came back I offered the priest a donation for the church. He said, "They have enough. They don't need any more." So finally I went across the street and I gave the guy in the drugstore some money and said, "If Father Geisman comes in here and wants..." he always bought a carton of cigarettes. I said, "It's on me, but he doesn't know where it came from."

In the army I think the only time I went to services was for Passover in '46 up to Tokyo. I was about the only Jewish fellow in the barracks. There was one guy from New York who knew quite a bit about Judaism. He was a Gentile but he was around enough Jewish people. He said, "If you get a chance bring me back a bottle of wine from the *seder*," and I did.

Frank: What did you do in the military?

Mr. Schneider: I was trained as an infantryman. When I got to Japan and when I got to this replacement depot they started interviewing. They were checking our records. I said to this guy, "The war was over. Just what do you think I will have to do or I will be doing?" He looked at my record and he said, "You're an infantryman. You'll probably pull guard duty and when you're not pulling guard duty then you'll probably be on a day and off a day. I said, "That's all? In other words I'll be continuing my basic training." He said, "Yeah, probably." I said, "That's all you got for me to do?" He looked over my records and saw that I did books for my dad. I knew how to do all these things. He said, "Come back this afternoon let me check something." I came back in the afternoon and he sent me across the road. He sent me up to the morning report office. Of course this was in the headquarters of this replacement depot. The guy looked over my records and he said, "Why not? Come up in the morning and we'll see what you can do." Well, they started me out filing ID cards. I told him, "That's all that you got for me to do?" He said, "OK." I wound up being what they call the strength recorder. I don't know if you're familiar with the morning reports. It's a report

that was turned in every 24 hours. [It tells] where everybody in the company is whether he is in the hospital or whether he's AWOL (absent without leave) or whatever. It accounts for everybody. I wound up in charge of the office with a sergeant's rating. It beats marching around doing nothing. Well, I guess I shouldn't put it that way, the infantrymen are important.

Frank: It's an important job not necessarily the most exciting job when you're just on guard duty.

Mr. Schneider: Well, I sat in the office. Because it was a replacement depot and this was just about when the war ended we had a bunch of guys that were going back to the United States and a bunch of guys that were coming in just like I came. I was on the first ship to come directly into Japan from the United States. There were days that I would come to the office at 8 o'clock in the morning and walk out of there at 2 o'clock the following morning just to keep up with the work because the records had to be in. It had to be accounted for every 24 hours whether it was turned in at 2 o'clock the following morning but they still had to have those records for that day.

Frank: While you were in the military, your parents kept the Jewish home while you were there but you didn't really practice Judaism other than in the home. Did you try and practice your Judaism while you were in the military at all?

Mr. Schneider: Like I said I think the only time I ever went to a service was a Passover in Tokyo and I figured hell, it's a good way to get out of here for a few hours. It didn't make any difference to me if I had Matzos or whatever. But it was a way of getting out of there and doing something different. They took us in a bus and brought us back that night. Like I said, I even brought this guy a bottle of wine from there.

Frank: Did you ever encounter any barriers? Did anybody do anything like making fun of you or an anti-Semitic act at all?

Mr. Schneider: No, No. I have after the army. I've had plenty of that. I didn't publicize my Judaism much either. I was brought up that way like I said, in a Gentile neighborhood, a Catholic neighborhood. My dad of course, it was mostly German people and if they came in and talked to him in German he understood German too. German is not that much different from Yiddish. There are a few differences...

Mrs. Schneider: If you listen and you know Yiddish you can pick up what they are saying.

Frank: It's similar enough.

Mr. Schneider: Coming up when I was ten, twelve, thirteen years old, it was about the time that Hitler was coming to power. Of course you didn't publicize too much that you were Jewish. I'm 75 years old and I've only used this (a fist) one time on somebody. I was about ten or twelve in grade school and this kid we were out in the schoolyard at recess time. This kid said something about the things that Hitler was doing was the best thing that could ever happen. Man I wound back and whapped him one. The principal saw me hit him. He took the two of us by the shoulders and said, "Go in the office." Both of us walked to the office. He came in and he said, "Why did you hit him?" I told him what he said and I said, "If he says it again right now I'll do it again." He turned to the other one and he said, "Did you say that?" He said, "Yes, I did." He says to me, "Now you go back to class." That was the end of it.

You still encounter, every once in a while, remarks like that. I worked at Lever Brothers. I don't know if they're still there down on Pennsylvania and Page. I worked in the warehouse. One night I was sitting, I drove a clamp truck. As production came down I took it off of the palletizer and put it in the bay and counted as we went through the night. I was sitting there waiting. It was kind of slow that night and this guy walked by me and he stopped. I won't use the exact language that he used but he said something to me. He said, "Are you really one of those XXXX Jews?" I just looked at him and I said, "I'm a Jew." I said, "If I ever hear that word from you again or any description like that again," I said, "I will run over you with this tractor and sweep you up with a broom and a shovel. If you don't believe me try me." I don't hear as much of it anymore as I used to but I'm sure there's still plenty of it that goes on.

Frank: I'm learning as I interview more and more people, in the military there doesn't seem to be a lot of examples of anti-Semitism. But there seems to be an undercurrent of it where it's not very vocal because people were in the situation where they had to rely on each other.

Mr. Schneider: When I was in Japan we had four battalions in this replacement depot, and three of them were white and one was black. The black one was across the road. The three whites were over on this side of the road and the black battalion was over on the other side of the road so that's the way it was. Today, of course, it's different.

Frank: I think all the questions I have you've answered. Do you have anything else you'd like to share?

Mr. Schneider: No, I think that just about covers it.

Frank: You got the discharge and then you came back....

Mr. Schneider: I came back to St. Louis and have been here ever since.



## Jack Sorkin

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Jack Sorkin conducted on September 17, 1999 at his residence at 8018 Crescent Drive, Clayton, MO 63105.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

Mr. Sorkin: St. Louis, I was born here.

Frank: Tell me a little bit about your upbringing, siblings, family.

Mr. Sorkin: I have a brother and a sister. I am the oldest of the three. My folks came here from Russia. My father, I think he was drafted in World War I and became a citizen through that service and my mother became a citizen because she was married to a citizen, which was the rule of the time. I don't know if it still is. He was a cabinetmaker. My grandfather, my father's father was a *milamed*, a teacher. I went to *cheder* there as did a lot of people I knew. He was kind of well known in the community. The grandfather on the other side, my mother's father was a very orthodox man also. Died rather early from pneumonia at Jewish hospital. My grandmother lived until about 1951 or so. I heard of it because I was in school at the time that she passed away. We were raised in an orthodox congregation. It was Chevra Kadisha, although I'm not sure. It was on Montclair and Ridge in the city. I went to various synagogues and Shuls including the Romanisha shul, which was at Romaine and Good Fellow. There was one across the street from it; I don't remember the name there. At the high holidays generally the kids; oh there was one on Belt just north of Easton. That is now Martin Luther King. That's where my father's father attended. He was one of the few who could, I think they called it a *Dichem*, they would prostrate themselves before the altar, before the bimah. I was never allowed to see that. What else can I say?

Frank: What about when you were growing up. How did you celebrate your Judaism in the home?

Mr. Sorkin: Well, my mother lit candles every Friday night. We kept *kosher*. The family got together on the various holidays. We went to shul. I went to *cheder*. We lived for three years in New York during the depression so I was *Bar Mitzvahed* there. But my grandfather tied the *tzitzit* on the *tallis* for me and knotted them. I still have the *tallis*. Until we moved I had been going to *cheder* with him.

Frank: You celebrated the holidays in your home and *Chanukah* and Passover.

Mr. Sorkin: Yes. Sure. We were very strict about not having *humutz* in the house on Pesach.

Frank: Moving on to the military, when did you get into the military?

Mr. Sorkin: I enlisted in August of 1942 and was called up in February of 1943. I volunteered for the aviation cadets. While I was waiting I worked for a couple of companies and the last one was the Missouri Pacific Railroad. I got kidded about enlisting and why are you still here?

I had to get my folks to sign for my enlistment because in '42 I was just 18. They really didn't want me to volunteer but I talked them into it saying that I would be going anyway and so forth. They finally signed for me. I went down to, I may have given you some wrong dates. It was August that I enlisted in '42 and then I was called up in February of '43 and went by train down to San Antonio.

That might have been the first time that I had non-*kosher* food. I remember stopping in Kansas City on the train and getting something they called Canadian bacon. I had no idea what it was. I thought it tasted pretty good. We got to San Antonio early in the morning, had the usual exams and then got into the cadets.

Frank: Why did you decide to enlist into the cadets? Into the aviation?

Mr. Sorkin: It seemed attractive to me and I saw a movie short with Jimmy Stewart playing the part of a pilot who gained a lot of attention. I had been thinking about it and it seemed like the most attractive branch. A friend of mine enlisted with me. Another friend, we were sort of a triumvirate in school; he enlisted a little bit later. I went to San Antonio. In the meantime, a friend of mine who was just two or three serial numbers from me moved to New York and he entered in New York. The third fellow got in a little bit later. He got into the ASTP Program. Do you know what that is? Army Specialist Training Program. He was here at Washington U. But, then he also went to flight school and became a bombardier.

Frank: Where did you serve in the military after you did training?

Mr. Sorkin: After cadets I was assigned to a B17 group in Alexandria, Louisiana. I had a little leave in the wintertime. It was in December. I was assigned to Alexandria. I went down there by train by myself. I had orders and I felt pretty important there. I called the base when I got in and they sent a truck, I think it was a truck. It was some kind of vehicle that picked me up and took me to the base. There I was assigned to a crew of a B17. We went through operational training. I was a navigator. We flew practice missions.

Then in March or April of '44, March I think, we were assigned to go overseas. We went first to Grand Island, Nebraska. On our way over we picked up our airplane. Maybe it was because it was close to a Boeing plant. I don't know why they assigned us there. From there we went to the Goose Bay, Labrador and across the North Atlantic landing for a couple of days in Iceland in the Keflavik

airport. We got to see Reykjavik the capital. Then from there we flew to an airport called Nutts Corner in Ireland where they took the airplane. We were ferried across to Scotland. From there went down to our base in England and I saw my first air raid. I was with the 92<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group there. Do you want me to go on about that?

Frank: Sure.

Mr. Sorkin: I flew eight missions. On the eighth I was shot down by fighters. Well we had bombed a place called Cottbus. It was a Foke-Wulff air base southeast of Berlin so we were pretty deep. After we bombed, we were hit by Foke-Wulff fighters. My plane caught fire and I heard somebody say, "There goes the wing!" So I bailed out. I jumped out of the little hatch behind our compartment. I was picked up by the Germans. We were pretty deep into Germany. Even if I hadn't been seen there was no place to go. The Germans were not very friendly. This was May 29 of 1944, just before the invasion. So there were no friendly troops on the continent at all. They were all in England and wherever else they gathered, well they gathered in England. So I heard about D-Day in a German camp. That's where I started smoking by the way, smoking cigarettes. When I was picked up I found that three of our crew hadn't made it, they had gone down with the airplane and had fallen out or something.

I was put into the jail on a German airbase. Lying in a cot in a jail cell I heard scratching. The walls were made of some sort of wood siding. One of the boards got pushed aside and somebody was handing through a lighted cigarette. It turned out to be a German who was also in the camp prison. That was the first cigarette I smoked.

I think he really thought he was doing me a favor but afterwards the guys got a little upset with me because with cigarettes being scarce it was a heck of a time to start smoking. From there I was taken to the interrogation center in Frankfurt by train. On the train we passed through Berlin and transferred to the Berlin subway. My pilot and I were escorted by two German guards and in the subway car I kind of thought there might be some hostility shown because we were still in uniform, but there wasn't anything. I didn't see a lot of Berlin but some from there down to Frankfurt. It was near Wetzlar, which is where the German Zeiss Optical factory is.

We were interrogated and stayed there for a while and that's where I heard about the invasion. That's the first place the interrogator said, "I see you are Jewish." I said, "Yes," but he didn't really say anything else about it, just to let me know that he knew. We were supposed to give him the name, rank, and serial number. I didn't have much to tell him anyway. When the plane crashed they did find some maps that had been in it and one of the maps had Peenemunde on it. Peenemunde is, I found out later, was a German experimental station where they were working on V1's and V2's and rockets. So he asked me, "What is the matter with

Peenemunde?" I pretended I didn't understand. I said, "I don't know what's the matter with Peenemunde." I think what he meant to say is why do you have something about Peenemunde? Why do you have it? I didn't really know and I couldn't tell him anyway.

From there we went down to Stalag Luft 3 which was in Sagan, again in South Eastern Germany near Breslau which I think is part of Poland. I stayed there for 11 months, no wait. The day I went down was May 29, 1944. The next January the 27<sup>th</sup> of '45, it was a cold and snowy night and we had been seeing German transport planes flying over very low and there were horse drawn wagons carrying supplies and people. We began to hear cannons. We knew from, we could get British Radio, BBC. We had a radio that some of the guys had built. I have no idea how they built it or how they got the parts or anything but cigarettes bought a lot of things. We got some through the Red Cross that the Germans didn't confiscate. Anyway, we knew the Russians were coming and we could hear the cannons, the artillery thundering. With about two hours notice on that January 27<sup>th</sup> we all marched out of that camp, it was a lot of people. It was cold and snowy. Some of the guys... Am I saying what you want?

Frank: I'm looking for a summary of where you were and your experience. Then I am going to focus in when you're done more on your experience Jewishly.

Mr. Sorkin: Some of the guys brought along everything they could carry as we walked out. It wasn't too far before they decided they couldn't carry all that equipment started to litter the side of the road. At one point, I don't know whether someone tried to leave the column, one of the Americans tried to leave the column and go into the woods on each side or what. But they started firing and everybody dropped down. Pretty soon, a lieutenant colonel who was in charge of our particular barracks said that's enough of that. He stood up and I followed and everyone stood up. They stopped firing. I never did find out what they were firing at.

Frank: Where did you go from there?

Mr. Sorkin: We walked for two or three days to Spremberg. It was a small town. In the meantime we had slept in the barn one time. I remember sleeping in the straw. We tried to get warm. It was pretty cold. One night we slept in a pottery factory, I guess because of the kilns. That was nice and warm. Then we got on the train there and they took us down to Stalag VIIA at Moosburg, which was north of Munich. On the way the train was strafed once by our fighters. I don't think we were hit at all. Some of the guys tried to escape but there was really not much escaping. We were fifty men in boxcars that had been 40 and 8's in World War I, forty men or eight horses. It was still in French on the sides of the boxcars. We couldn't all sit down or sleep so we had to take turns. Then we got to VIIA. For a while we lived in tents.

Some of this is not exactly, I don't remember all the details but I remember sleeping in a tent. In the rain the ground got wet so we got out and dug trenches around it to take up the water. On April 29<sup>th</sup> there was a firefight and our Third Army came through. Before that some fighters had dropped leaflets warning the Germans not to try to move us because we had complete control of the sky. Although at one point I remember lying in the tent hearing the air raid sirens go off coming toward us. I ran out and saw the twin engine of a small plane. I don't know why it came over at night.

Then on the 29<sup>th</sup>, Patton's Third Army came through and there was a firefight. The SS fell back into the camp. I think they shot some of the Volkssturm who were on guard, some of the older men because they didn't want to fight any more. The jig was up. Then the next day, Patton himself came in and talked to us gathered around him. He did have a chromed plate helmet and pistols, six guns.

We were trucked out to an airbase and some of the guys went wild. They put twenty millimeter shells into fires that were burning. We explored the base. I filled up a German helmet and a knapsack that the German troops had used, with bayonets and other stuff.

From there, we were taken by DC3, which were C-47's. I think it's to Camp Lucky Strike. There, it must have been near Le Havre, a French port. You could see the ships that had been sunk in the port half of them sticking out of the water. We boarded the ship that went to South Hampton, England. I'm not sure what for. Then we sailed across the Atlantic. It was kind of a stormy crossing and landed in New Jersey. From there I came home. I had leave in Miami Beach. I was discharged in November of '45.

Frank: Going back to the beginning of your military experience. Did you try and live Jewishly? Did you try and practice your Judaism during any of this experience?

Mr. Sorkin: Not really. I don't know how. I suppose I could have some how, but I'm not sure how. There was no holiday. We were alerted and went out on a raid. I never even tried to tell you the truth. But I didn't know anybody else who was doing it either. In PW (Prisoner of War) camp, there was no way to do it. I don't know. Even in the cadets, I got there in February, I suppose I went through Pesach without changing anything. There was no break in our training.

Frank: You didn't think about it?

Mr. Sorkin: I guess I thought about it writing back and forth from home. There wasn't much I could do. I suppose, looking back on it, I could have asked for a leave to go into town and maybe find a Jewish family. I know there were some Jewish families in San Antonio. I spent a lot of the time in San Marcos while in the cadets. I don't know if there are any Jews in San Marcos or not. That was fairly close to Austin. There must have been some because I got my first officer's

uniform in Austin from a place called Frank's. That was the last name. I think they were Jewish. I found out later. The answer is no. We really didn't.

Frank: Were you friendly with other Jews?

Mr. Sorkin: Yeah. I felt kinship with other Jewish cadets or officers. When I first went in... My last name starts with an 'S'. So how the army did it, we had thirteen guys names Smith just before me. I was 'S-O'. In the barracks, one of the fellows I don't know if he had been training as a minister or what, but he conducted Christian services on Sunday. So I heard some of that, but I never heard anybody doing anything Jewish. There was a staff sergeant or a tech sergeant in the regular army who was sort of in charge of these cadets and shepherding them around. His assistant was a fellow he called Levy (short e), I'm sure what I would call Levy (long e like Leevy) who was Jewish from New York. They were up above me as a new cadet and I didn't have any fellowship with them. But I did meet some other Jewish guys in the cadets. I guess we were a little closer than some of the others.

Frank: What about in your bombardier group?

Mr. Sorkin: I can't think of... Oh! When we got to our base in England, at Podington, there was a fellow named Teriinsky, who I'm pretty sure was Jewish. He had been there for some time. We had got there after a big raid when we had lost a lot of airplanes. So the barracks were kind of empty. He told us about what had been going on. I lost track of him. I don't know what happened to him, whether he finished up. We were assigned 25 mission at the time before we went home. I don't know if he was transferred to another barracks or what? I remember when we first got there his telling us about some fellow in the barracks who had been dismissed or something happened to him. He didn't want to go back. He had been through some horrendous raids. He said this fellow shot off his toe on purpose to get out of it. Other than that, I don't remember any other Jewish people. I did meet some in PW camp, but I don't remember any in our group. I know there were some.

Frank: I've heard some stories from other people I've interviewed that they put no preference for their religion on their ID tags or some people would take their ID tags, if they were captured and just throw them away. So the Germans didn't know they were Jewish. Did you ever consider that?

Mr. Sorkin: No. I had the "H" on the tags. That might be why that interrogator realized that I was Jewish. No. I didn't even think of doing that.

Frank: You were more comfortable with who you were.

Mr. Sorkin: Yeah. In fact I was wearing a mezuzah that my grandmother had sent around my neck. I never got that back. They took it. I did meet a couple of

people in camp. That was one of the few anti-Semitic things that happened to me in that camp. A fellow named Nick something from Chicago. Rumors were that he had... we called him "The Bear" because he was a big, hulking, hairy guy and he had played professional football. He made some remark about Jews at one time. I don't remember why or exactly what he said, but afterwards some of the other fellows came up and apologized and said don't pay attention to him. You know, we were all supposed to be on the same side.

Frank: Did you ever experience anything else?

Mr. Sorkin: No. I don't think so. I can't remember ever experiencing anything else.

Frank: How would you review your overall military experience?

Mr. Sorkin: Very memorable. It still influences me in ways. It was a long time before I could start walking without stepping off with my left foot. In fact, since I retired I got back in contact with some people from the 92<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group. I found a fellow who lives here in South County who was in the same group. In fact he stayed in. He was a senior pilot or a command pilot. Another fellow, Buddy Bleich, who lives here, he came to the group after I was already gone. Another fellow who was in another group but in the same wing. There were four groups. Since then, I've had time and have gotten together, I've been to three reunions of the Bomb Group. One of them was in England when they dedicated the American Air Force Museum in Britain. In fact we took our grandson with us. It was very gratifying because people remember very well the Americans.

Other than that... I still think about those years. I remember when I got to the PW camp, they warned us. We got our orientation by some of the prisoners who had been there. When we washed dishes, I can't remember what kind of dishes they were, they said be sure and rinse them well because the soap will give you dysentery if you leave it on. I rinsed the heck out of them.

There were other things that happened. I think I appreciate some things more because I remember what it could be. I remember we didn't get much in the way of opportunities to shower or bathe. In fact one night in VIIA, another fellow named Norm Stifel, woke up at about two o'clock in the morning and decided there was nobody around at that time and there was a pump in the barracks that was a source of water. So he pumped for me while I showered and I pumped for him. The faucet was only about two feet off the ground. So we had to bend down pretty good. The water was very cold, but we felt better afterwards. Things flash in your mind after a while.

Frank: A positive experience.

Mr. Sorkin: Positive. I'm very thankful that I'm here.

## LTC Ed Winthrop

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with LTC Ed Winthrop conducted on September 16, 1999 at his residence at 8112 Sagamore Road, Leawood, KS 66206.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

LTC Winthrop: I grew up in Duluth, Minnesota. A little village at the North Pole.

Frank: Tell me a little about your upbringing, growing up with your family.

LTC Winthrop: I came from a very Jewish home. I'm basically a Galanthan Heb. I went to Hebrew School and much to my mother's chagrin, I didn't like it but I did it and I was *Bar Mitzvah* and the whole shebang. Once my parents said I didn't have to go anymore I didn't go anymore and that was it. I had a good bringing up. When I was a real young, virtually an infant, I had a great grandmother that lived with us and she only spoke Yiddish. So I learned Yiddish pretty well. I've forgotten most of it now. But as a youngster, teenager, and young adult, I could understand it and speak relatively well.

Frank: Do you have any siblings?

LTC Winthrop: Two younger brothers.

Frank: What did your father do for a living?

LTC Winthrop: He owned, what in those days was a big supermarket. One of the biggest in Duluth. It isn't now. My younger brother who took it over just sold it about a year ago. Big article in the paper and everything else. It had been in the family since, I think, 1921 when my father came back from France after World War I. By the time he sold it, it was more like a mom and pop store compared to the supermarkets today.

Frank: What was your practice of Judaism before you went to the academy? I know you mentioned you became *Bar Mitzvahed* and then you stopped going, but what about in the home?

LTC Winthrop: Just the family. Celebrating Shabbat from time to time. I practically never went to services other than the high holidays. We always celebrated Passover with *seders* at an aunt and uncle of mine, and I always looked forward to that very much.

Frank: What attracted you to the academy at West Point?



LTC Winthrop: I think I saw some movies early in my teenage years about the academy and it intrigued me. My father served under an academy graduate in World War I. He was very impressed with the guy. After the war when he got back from France and he came back to New York and on his way back to Minnesota, the train stopped at West Point. They bivouacked there for about three days and he looked around and was very impressed with the place. Then, he kept after me particularly through my high school years. Academically I was not working up to my potential. He was right but he could not seem to get me to do much. I was more interested in athletics then I was in academics. He always used to say I wish I had a son that would go to West Point but you could never get in. So, I proved to him I can and I did.

Frank: What year did you get into the....

LTC Winthrop: '42. I originally thought that I would graduate in '46 but after the war started they shortened our class and they pushed us through.

Frank: That's a full college education. Very intense. Tell me a little about your experience at West Point.

LTC Winthrop: Once I finished the plebe year it was kind of enjoyable. I liked it. The first year was very hard to adjust to, a very tough year, particularly for the non-military family, which I came from. Plus, I was little older than some. I already had two years of college but that was not unusual coming to West Point in those days. It is today. It wasn't then. I think the older few guys had a little harder time to adjust because there could be guys two years your junior raising hell with you. It was a little tough but once I got through plebe year I had no problem. Other than Spanish I had no problem with the academics there. I didn't graduate at the top of the class either but I didn't have any trouble.

Frank: Were you able to practice any of your Judaism while you were at the Point?

LTC Winthrop: Well that's fairly interesting. When I was there and up to about 15 years ago chapel attendance for all cadets was mandatory. You either went to the Protestant chapel, the Catholic chapel, or the Jewish chapel. Of course I opted for the Jewish chapel. They didn't tell you where you had to go but you had to go to one. So, I went and that was pretty much it. Outside of the academy I don't recall having any particular religious thing. We went from time to time and had trouble because at the time the academy did not have a Jewish chapel, which they do now. We have our new chapel, in fact I just got their bulletin and I'll show it to you. We used the old cadet chapel. But that was pretty much it. We used to moan and groan a little bit because we used to go to chapel before breakfast on Sunday and we had the longest march to breakfast, farther than the Protestant and the Catholics.

Frank: Who led the services?

LTC Winthrop: We used to get a visiting chaplain. We had one fellow that came in from Newburgh, New York which is more than twenty miles or so. And then we had a really sharp guy that came up from Brooklyn. Everybody liked him and we didn't care that much for the Newburgh chaplain, but everybody liked the guy from Brooklyn. I don't remember their names. It was so long ago.

Frank: Did you ever experience anybody trying to inhibit your ability to practice Judaism?

LTC Winthrop: I never experienced anything like that at the academy nor in the army. I had a couple of incidents that happened in the army that were rather hilarious, but the only bad incident, in fact I would appreciate it if you wouldn't record this...

[Time of no recording.]

Frank: So you graduated West Point in '45. Where did you serve afterward?

LTC Winthrop: After going to Branch school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, I was in the Signal Corps, I opted for the Signal Corps. I went to Korea and I spent two years in Asia. I came back to the states and the army sent me to graduate school at Ohio State University. I got my masters in double E (electrical engineering) at Ohio State. After that I went back to, for a couple years, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. I served as the operations officer for the Electronic Warfare Center. From there I was shipped back out to the far east and to Korea and then to Japan. Then I got my family over to Japan and at that time when they came over my son was nine months old. He's forty-seven today. But anyway, they came over and we had a very pleasant tour in Japan, very enjoyable.

We came back to the states and after going through the Signal School at Fort Monmouth I went on and taught ROTC at the University of Wisconsin. I was on the faculty there for three years. Then I went to Fort Leavenworth through the Command and General Staff College. Then I was held over on the faculty. We spent a total of four years up at Fort Leavenworth: probably the highlight from a career standpoint. Then I was transferred overseas to Germany and I commanded the 24<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Division for a little over a year. Then I was transferred up to Berlin when I became signal officer for the Berlin Command.

Frank: When did you actually retire?

LTC Winthrop: I came back to the states and I was with the Department of the Army Inspector General's office for a couple of years. Then I retired.

Frank: Throughout your experience of traveling around the world, which you have really done, did you attempt to practice Judaism?

LTC Winthrop: Not really. I can't say we did. We did a little bit when we were at Fort Leavenworth because they did have a congregation up there. But there weren't many Jewish families when we were stationed there in the early 60's. There was such a tremendous social life that went on at Fort Leavenworth, particularly when I was on the faculty. Other than maybe three, four times over a three year period maybe we attended the local synagogue. Now in Germany my son was *Bar Mitzvahed* in Berlin. He was the second American after World War II to be *Bar Mitzvahed* in Germany. We got a tutor for him. I can't find it. I've been looking for it. I've got a tremendous picture, a snapshot, of my mother with the Catholic chaplain on one arm and the protestant chaplain on the other. They came to the *Bar Mitzvah* service. But that was probably the highlight.

Frank: You made a reference to an earlier experience of someone trying to...

LTC Winthrop: When I was in Korea the first time it's kind of interesting. This would have been about 1947. I was just a lieutenant then. The captain left and rotated back to the states. He had commanded the company and I was put in temporary command of the company. Lo and behold my first sergeant said that he had a soldier that wanted to see me. This kid comes in and said that he was "very upset because he didn't get promoted." He was a PFC and wished to move to corporal. I said, "Well, I'll have to look into it." He didn't get promoted but I'm sure his performance review didn't warrant it. He said, "Oh no. That wasn't the case," he said he was "sure he didn't get promoted because he was Jewish." I said, "I was quite certain that that wasn't the reason he didn't get promoted." But I never mentioned the fact that I was Jewish. "I think that you better straighten up and fly right and maybe the next month or the month after you will get promoted. Lo and behold he did straighten out and he did get promoted. That was later.

Frank: Somebody making excuses.

LTC Winthrop: And that is what he was doing making an excuse and he was going to use that as a threat.

Frank: Do you have any other stories like that?

LTC Winthrop: No not a whole lot. Nobody really cared in the service. Everybody judged you by your character and how well you performed. I never had any gripes. I had some bad breaks career wise, but that's just the way the chips fall. I don't feel that I was prejudice or inhibited in any way.

Frank: I am really finding in my research that the experience that you had is based upon the individual personality of people more than they are based upon any other criteria.

LTC Winthrop: Of my contemporaries that came out of the academy and were Jewish some did well and some of us didn't do as well as we would have liked to. I don't remember ever hearing any of my contemporaries complaining about the fact that they were Jewish and in any way inhibited. The military is pretty good as far as fairness is concerned. They did a nice job in that respect. They don't get many Jewish people in relative to our population. But on the other hand we do reasonably well. We have a pretty good turn out at West Point. I don't think that you'll find any of them complaining that they have run into prejudice in their career.

Frank: I have only heard stories of people who because they haven't met Jews before and the ignorance and have these prejudice notions, but that is only taught from generation to generation. The idea is once they have met someone who doesn't fit that stereotype that changes the view.

LTC Winthrop: They usually think what kind of soldier are you. If you're OK, you're OK. You could be anything. I mean anything. It goes for blacks. My personal feeling towards it at my age when I commanded a battalion, my black soldiers, I had quite a few. They tended to be either very good or not good, or very bad. They didn't seem to have a lot of them in the middle. But the ones that were good were cracker jacks. You could swear by them. They were treated just like anybody else. I never had anybody, that I'm aware of, complain to me that because he was black he didn't get a fair shake. I'm not saying that it didn't happen I never became aware of it in my experience.

Frank: Do you have anything else that you would like to add or share?

LTC Winthrop: No, I can't.

Frank: You told some good stories and shared some interesting things.

LTC Winthrop: Good. If you have any further questions that you would like to ask. The career was great. I liked it. I got out and retired early when I realized I wasn't going to get a star. I knew I wasn't because I wasn't selected for the War College at Carlisle. At that time frame and they probably still do, if you weren't selected for the War College you weren't going to get a star. If you were selected it didn't mean you would get one. But you didn't get that punch on your card you were dead in the water no matter who you were. You could be the son of a four star general and it wouldn't help.

Frank: Clearly to get the advancement you had to get the schooling.

LTC Winthrop: So few get selected for the War College, about half. I'm not sure what the percentage is today. In my day roughly half of the regulars likely went to General Staff College. But roughly, I doubt if more than five percent went to Carlisle, maybe ten percent. I don't know. It was very small.

## Jerome W. Wurmser

Interview by Franklin A. DeWoskin with Jerome W. Wurmser conducted on September 4, 1999 at his residence at 3409 Westridge Circle, Lexington, KY 40502.

Frank: Where are you from originally?

Mr. Wurmser: Louisville.

Frank: Born and raised?

Mr. Wurmser: Born in Louisville. Moved here in 1961.

Frank: What kind of upbringing did you have?

Mr. Wurmser: Well, my father was from Germany and my mother was from somewhere near Riga. So my mother was religious but my dad wasn't. I went to Sunday school and we belonged to a temple. My folks didn't attend on a regular basis. They had a little grocery store, with both working there. They only went on the High Holidays. My mom did want me to be *Bar Mitzvahed* which they didn't want to do at the temple, they didn't want to do it. So I guess she raised enough Cain. On a Saturday morning near my thirteenth birthday they called me to the torah and I recited a blessing or two and that was it. It wasn't much of a *Bar Mitzvah*.

Frank: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Wurmser: Yeah, they're both deceased. I had a brother that was nine years older and a sister that was five years older than me. My brother, Sol, was in the navy in World War II and served on a destroyer in the Pacific.

Frank: Jewishly, you said that you really weren't involved?

Mr. Wurmser: Not a whole lot. Brith Sholom Temple every Saturday they had a service and I had to go on a Saturday morning and then Sunday school on Sunday. They had a half way Hebrew class on Saturday after the service. That didn't amount to a whole lot. Now, my mom, on Friday night she'd light the candles.

Frank: So you practiced a lot of your Judaism at home.

Mr. Wurmser: We lived in a *kosher* home. My mother kept *kosher*.

Frank: So your practice before World War II....

Mr. Wurmser: That's when I really quit keeping *kosher* when I went into the army because up until then I lived at home. But in the army that was the end of that. We don't keep *kosher* now.

Frank: What are some specifics of how you practiced Judaism growing up.

Mr. Wurmser: Well, my mother went by the Jewish calendar on everything. She knew whatever date something was going to be was Nissan or whatever and she corresponded with her sister and cousins. Her sister lived in Louisville. Later when we moved to Lexington she corresponded with writing in Hebrew with Hebrew script, but English words. My folks always closed the grocery for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* and we'd go as a family to Third Street Temple. Even though Pop wasn't outwardly religious, he wouldn't smoke his cigar on Shabbas.

Frank: Transliteration.

Mr. Wurmser: Yeah. Mom spoke German, Russian of course, a little bit of Polish. She and my father met in Louisville. Each of them had a cousin already living in Louisville and that's why they settled there. It was more or less an arranged marriage. Well, it wasn't arranged. Mom's cousin had three prospective husbands over one afternoon for tea and she picked out my dad.

Frank: That's interesting.

Mr. Wurmser: In fact she said he was so handsome she didn't think he was Jewish. So she had handed him a *siddur* upside down to see if he knew enough to turn it around.

Frank: You celebrated of course the High Holidays and Passover.

Mr. Wurmser: Yeah. In fact, due to the economics of the day we didn't go to our own temple, we went to where it didn't cost to buy a ticket. You know how they used to charge extra for the High Holy Days. So evidently they couldn't afford it because we used to go to the Third Street Temple, another reform temple, that had a balcony for people who for one reason or another didn't belong. That's where we used to go on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

Frank: Interesting. You kept Passover at home?

Mr. Wurmser: Oh yeah. Ma had two sets of dishes for Passover. I mean we did the whole ritual. Mom had the two sets of dishes, the *milchika* and *fleishika* and the whole bit.

Frank: Moving on into your military experience a little bit, when did you get into the military?

APPENDIX B  
Jerome W. Wurmser

Mr. Wurmser: I joined the reserve to get into the cadet training program flying program. Then as they had openings at different airfields they would call you up. I joined in August 1942. They called me to active duty in January of '43. I didn't actually report for active duty until January of '43. I was inducted in Fort Hayes, Ohio. Then they sent me to Texas to the aviation cadet center and I was there a couple of months and then to a primary flying school.

Frank: Why did you get into the military?

Mr. Wurmser: Well, as a kid, I always was interested in airplanes. I was building model airplanes a little bit early on. In 1940 they used to have something called CMTC - Citizens Military Training Camp, have you ever heard of it?

Frank: Not until now.

Mr. Wurmser: Well, CMTC was a program where by if you attended for a month for four consecutive summers and took correspondence courses in between you could get a commission in the reserve. My idea was to go to CMTC and get a reserve commission and learn to fly. This was 1940 and I was 17 years old. So, that summer of 1940 I went to CMTC for a month's training. So then I guess they dropped that CMTC in 1941. So I thought I would get a commission in the reserve and then go to flight school and learn to fly in the peacetime. I wasn't thinking of the war. So when the war came on I thought it was a good chance to learn to fly.

Frank: So you got into the military more or less to fly and it so happened that the war came along also.

Mr. Wurmser: Well the war had already started when I got in but I was thinking about it before the war.

Frank: Interesting. Where did you serve in the military?

Mr. Wurmser: In the states or overseas?

Frank: Both.

Mr. Wurmser: In the states I was sent to pre-flight school in San Antonio, called the SAAC, San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center. Then primary flight school was at Corsican, Texas for a couple of months. Basic was at Greenville, Texas for a couple of months. Advanced was at Eagle Pass, Texas. Then they came out with the order of who graduated flight school in January of 1944. Lo and behold I was assigned to be an instructor. Then we were granted leave for a couple of weeks. I had to report back to Randolph Field to go to flight instructor school, which I

didn't really want to do. So I did that after a month at flight instructor school and they sent me back to where I had gone through the basic course to be a basic flight instructor.

After about three months as a flight instructor, I was transferred to OTU, Operational Training Unit. So I went to Moore Field, at Mission, Texas and was checked out in P-40's. Then I was transferred to Dover, Delaware to check out in the P-47. After a few months in Dover we were sent over to France.

I joined our squadron in France in September 1944. It was Amberieu, France. I'll tell you something interesting there. I was in a replacement center in Italy. We were waiting to be assigned and we were all split up. A fellow I knew, my best buddy, he stayed in Italy. So it was about 14 of us and it was either *Rosh Hashanah* or *Yom Kippur*. I even checked with Jon [Adland, the local rabbi] one time to see what date *Rosh Hashanah* was on in 1944. I forget now which one it was. On that day they were sending me from Italy to Southern France. I was sitting in that C-47 and thinking what the hell am I doing here on *Rosh Hashanah* or was it *Yom Kippur*? This thing is going to get shot down. One plane unescorted, all by itself, flying from Naples to Amberieu, France where our 324 Fighter Group was supposed to be. We landed at Amberieu and they weren't even there. We were there all night and the next day we found out that they had just moved the day before. As the front advanced, they would move to an airfield closer to the front and the 324<sup>th</sup> was now in Dole, France. The fourteen of us were divided up among the three squadrons: the 314<sup>th</sup>, 315<sup>th</sup> and 316<sup>th</sup>. I was assigned to the 316<sup>th</sup>.

Out of the fourteen, after three months, there were two of us that were still alive and nothing had happened to us at all. Twelve of the fourteen had either had accidents or had gotten shot down. Twelve of the fourteen were gone in three months, whether they were alive or dead or shot down or in accidents. One guy, Norman Robida, was studying to be a priest before joining up. He was killed on his first mission. He got to fly before the rest of us because the 314<sup>th</sup> was short of pilots. My squadron commanding officer made us fly as his wingman for a couple of hours before letting us go on a mission. The first several times it wasn't all that scary. Then it started getting scary after this one went down and this one crashed. One thing after another.

Frank: Was it more doing bombing missions or more air to air?

Mr. Wurmser: I flew 66 missions. Two of these were bomber escort. All the rest, close support of the infantry, dive bombing and strafing trucks, trains, and anything moving on the autobahn.

Flack got most of them, anti-aircraft. One of the fellows in my original group was shot down in a dogfight. He was in the 315<sup>th</sup>. I heard it on the radio. They were



somewhere in our vicinity and we heard them in a dogfight and I remember hearing him call on the radio, "This guys shooting the hell out of me, somebody help me."

In fact I took a video picture of his tombstone at our reunion in France last year. His name was Harry Schafer. I found his tombstone in this military cemetery. You know, I'm thinking here, Harry's been lying here 55 years and Rosie said it would be nice if we knew if he had any siblings that we could write to. I don't think he was married most of us weren't but somewhere he probably has a brother or sister or somebody, who knows. That one cemetery we visited had over 10,000 American soldiers buried there, and about 3% of them were Jewish, about 300. Rosie was going around putting rocks on all these Star of David tombstones.

Frank: Did you serve with a lot of Jewish soldiers?

Mr. Wurmser: There was one other Jewish fellow in our squadron, one other pilot and he got shot down. I've got a letter in there he sent me after he was shot down telling me what happened to him. I got it in my scrapbook and he just told me about the dogfight bang and he bailed out. Then somebody from the FFI, French Force of the Interior (underground), got a hold of him and next thing you know he was back in a camp somewhere waiting to go back to America. He wrote me a letter, did I have his typewriter to send it to him which I did. The custom was, when someone went down, we'd divide up his belongings and I kept his typewriter. I've been trying to find him for 50 years. His name was Edmund Wright II from New York City. I found a bunch of Edmund Wrights retired in Florida over the internet but I haven't been able to locate him. Because, I really want to know what happened in that flight, as I heard conflicting stories from some of the guys as to who actually shot down who. From what I heard, he might have been hit by one of our guys, maybe accidentally.

I have another letter in there, I don't know if you're interested in seeing any memorabilia, but I got a letter there's a fellow that lives in Colorado Springs and his name is Charlie B. He and I were really good buddies in Dover, Delaware. When we got sent to Italy, they split us up, he stayed in Italy. Even though he flew the P-47 here in the states, they put him in a P-51 squadron. I went to France and he stayed in Italy. I can look at the letter and tell you but about a month or so went by and we were corresponding and I wrote him a letter. About five years ago he found my name somewhere and called me up. I went out to Colorado Springs to see him, which was a big mistake because here is this guy in one of those militia, all this anti-Semitic literature in his house. We were going to stay a week; we stayed three days and left. But anyway he gave me this letter that he had saved and I copied it. I think that I had about 8 or 10 missions then and told him about some guys in our original group that were already shot down. Anyway, it was real strange with this guy. He was a different person than I knew as a youngster when we were really close friends. He believed the Jews were trying to take over the world. I know his wife told Rosie she was against what he was

doing, his second wife. His first wife died. But she told Rosie he had recently given a thousand dollars to Lyndon LaRouche. We went to breakfast one morning and he and a bunch of his buddies, one a retired FBI guy, and these guys were all weird. They were like you read about in Idaho or somewhere. Anyway after about three days we made an excuse and left. Since then I get a card from his wife at Christmas. It's been about four or five years ago since we were there. The letter I wrote him I remember he let me copy it, he let me bring it back here and copy it and I mailed it back to him. He wanted to keep the original in his scrapbook.

Now, when I got back I told Jon Adland about this and he gave me the name of somebody in New York, Anti Defamation League. I called them on the phone and they sent me a bunch of literature and they sent him a bunch of literature. Now one thing he did tell me and I found out he was right. I don't know the details of it. The Anti Defamation League did get into some kind of mess where they shouldn't have gotten in at the request of the FBI. They were all wrong on this particular thing, which they admitted. I really don't remember the details of it now. But this is one of the things where the FBI was looking into some kind of espionage or anti-government thing and got the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) involved. They admitted afterwards that that was a mistake. But they, the ADL, sent him a bunch of literature pointing out the fallacies in the views held by Charlie B. and his friends.

Frank: Interesting. During the war did you try and practice any Judaism at all?

Mr. Wurmser: I went one time on leave in England. I don't know if I was on leave, yeah I was on leave in London I went to an Orthodox Synagogue and when they're sitting down, I'm standing up and I didn't know what was going on and everybody was rocking and it was not what I was used to. That was the only time I went. I think in primary and basic I went once or twice. You know, you're the only Jewish guy there. They're gonna have a service on the post and there are only five or six guys showed up. I think I was the only cadet and there were a couple of enlisted men and nobody knew anybody. But I went a few times.

Frank: Did you have any interaction with any Jewish chaplains at all?

Mr. Wurmser: No, never met a Jewish chaplain. The one or two services I attended was conducted by one of the enlisted men, who seemed to be orthodox.

Frank: Did you encounter any barriers in your Judaism at all in anything you tried to do?

Mr. Wurmser: No, the only thing... No I didn't really. When I took the test to learn to fly. I took the test with the idea I was going to become a pilot. When I got to San Antonio they re-tested us a couple of weeks later. When they called us into class they told me that I was going to be a navigator, and I didn't want to be a navigator.

Mrs. Wurmser: Do you think that was a bad answer for a Jew?

Mr. Wurmser: No, but I really wanted to be a pilot. Anyway, I talked to a psychologist or a psychiatrist or whoever he was. I wanted to fly I didn't join to be a navigator. I finally convinced him to recommend me for pilot training. He said that sometimes if you're motivated enough so you can make it. I did get a lot of check rides and I used to wonder if it was something they wrote in the, you know, keep your eye on this guy he is probably not going to make it, I think I had the feeling that I had more check rides. The civilian or primary flying school instructors were civilian old bush pilots that really knew how to fly. The guys that gave me the first 60 hours they were experts. But they had army check pilots on the field and they would take you up for a check ride. I had a lot of check rides.

Frank: The check rides, they would just be sitting near you?

Mr. Wurmser: They would sit in the plane behind you, the two-seater airplanes in primary, with an open cockpit. They would tell you to do this and do that and fly upside down and do a split 's' and spins and all the different techniques. Landing, take off's, short field landings and all kinds of stuff, and if you failed the check-ride you were out. It seemed like I had more check rides than most of the guys. It seemed like to me at the time.

On the way overseas I did have a fight with a guy. We were in the ship we were down in the hold in the lower deck and I heard this guy say, 'When I get over there if I see a Jew and a German I am going to shoot the Jew first.' That's the God's honest truth. This guy was from South Carolina.

Frank: Was he an officer?

Mr. Wurmser: Yeah, a pilot.

Frank: What ended up happening with that?

Mr. Wurmser: We had a little fight and they pulled us apart. I just hit him as hard as I could. I can still see his face. I don't remember his name but he had straight black hair. He looked like he had some Indian in him, he was from South Carolina. I remember his hair was oily, straight black and he had an olive complexion. But he sure did say that if he saw a Jew and a German he would shoot the Jew first.

Frank: Wow. Did you encounter any other anti-Semitism during the war?

Mr. Wurmser: No. I was stationed in Germany and we got there the day the war was over. We had moved to a new airfield and it happened to be near Stuttgart, Germany and I was there from May 'till five months after the war ended.

Flew 66 missions, two of them were escort missions with bombers. The rest of them were what we call road "reccie" and close support for the infantry. We fly up to the front and call the infantry division on the ground via radio and they would tell us where they needed help. We had an airforce liaison officer from our group on temporary duty. In fact, I had to go up for two weeks. When it was my turn, I went to the 45<sup>th</sup> division for two weeks to be the liaison officer. In other words, the guy in the front lines would call into this trailer if they were stuck and needed a plane to dive bomb on the other side of that road or a tank in their way. He would tell me and I would convey the request for help to the flight circling above. I would pass it to the planes and they would do whatever.

I was with the 45<sup>th</sup> Division when they went through the Siegfried line. I have a picture in there of our squadron and I'm not in the picture. For a long time I couldn't figure out why I was not in that picture, everyone is lined up in front of the plane. Mostly everybody is looking real sad except for a couple of guys. But there was a plane that crashed while they were lined up for that picture, crashed on the runway and most of the fellows were real sad. Then I finally saw the date on the picture and that it was taken during that period I was with the 45<sup>th</sup> Division. I was with them when they went through the Siegfried Line at Saarbrücken, Germany. When they got to Aschaffenburg, Germany, they had a terrible battle. There was a terrible battle at this town of Aschaffenburg. Patton was 100 miles past it and the 7<sup>th</sup> Army came along, the 45<sup>th</sup> Division in particular thinking that everything was clear and this town wasn't taken. Patton had gone around it. The 45<sup>th</sup> Division had a hell of a battle there for three or four days. They got into the town and there was civilians hanging from the telephone poles, some with signs on them saying they wanted to surrender and stuff like that.

Frank: So this was in France or Germany?

Mr. Wurmser: Aschaffenburg, Germany. They had the SS there I guess in charge of the town and they wanted to fight to the last man. I don't know if they did or not after a day or two I got out of there and returned to my squadron as my time up front was over.

Frank: You said there was one other Jew in your squadron and you didn't experience any overt anti-Semitism at all except for that one situation on the boat?

Mr. Wurmser: Edmond Wright, he was a typical New Yorker I think. Well, I don't know what I want to say about him but when he got shot down that's why I'd like to find him. I'd like to find out who shot him down. Because I heard something after that flight landed, that in this dogfight he accidentally crossed in front of one of our planes, this person was firing and hit Wright. That's what I heard at first. After the flight landed, everyone was still excited and talking and gesturing with their hands and telling what happened. In this particular dogfight, our guys shot down five German plane while losing one, Lt. Wright. Of course the letter

APPENDIX B  
Jerome W. Wurmser

Wright wrote me just said a German plane was behind him, a Focke Wolf which looks a little like a P47, but I don't know. That is all hearsay and rumor so I don't know what happened to him. I wasn't on this flight, but I wouldn't be surprised. I even remember the guy's name that said Wright crossed in front of him and shot him down. But I don't know but I still don't think it was anything anti-Jewish with him. He was a loud, talkative...

Frank: The New Yorker as opposed to the Jew. Did you observe any other things going on that you'd like to share?

Mr. Wurmser: That's about it. I got my logbook in there. We had a mission one time. My father comes from a town called Alt Breisach, Germany in this little village across from Colmar, France. There was a bridge that goes across The Rhine there. We had a mission to try and dive bomb that bridge. That was kind of a strange feeling to look down. Then we had a couple of other missions that were in the Breisach area. My dad got out of the German Army in 1912 and came to America in 1913. He went right to Louisville and got married. I was born ten years later.

Frank: When did you marry?

Mr. Wurmser: '47. I went back to college, Rose Rita was going in as a freshman. I was discharged from service in November, '45 and school started in January '46, a new semester. She was going in as a freshman and we met and started dating a short while after that and in '47 we eloped.

Frank: That's great.

Mr. Wurmser: That's another Jewish custom. Her mom wanted the older sister to marry first and she had an older sister.

Frank: You never want to step in front of your sibling.

Mr. Wurmser: She did. We did. Put her sister on the ball though. She became engaged shortly thereafter. So that's about it. I joined the reserve before being separated from service at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The reason most of us joined was because whoever was going to join the reserve was going to be out of there in a day or two and whoever didn't join the reserve it was going to be a week or two before they got around to you. So almost everybody joined the reserve. It was for a five-year period. I used to go out to Godman Field, Fort Knox, and to Standfort Field in Louisville on weekends and fly. When the five years was up the Korean War had started and they told us to forget the five-year deal we're still in. So I was in another 3 years. Finally, I quit going to the meetings and as I had two children by then, my wife wanted me out.

I had one terrible accident back when I was flying out of Dover. There's a move called a split S where you roll over like this and like this and four of us were flying in formation. I was out of position and I was trying to catch up so I was going about 100 miles an hour faster than the guy in front of me trying to catch him. He pulled up and lost all his airspeed and went into this dive well....do you know what compressibility is? Have you ever heard the term?

Frank: I've heard of it, I'm not that familiar with it.

Mr. Wurmser: It's when you approach the speed of sound and the controls lock up on the plane. Anyway, I'm going, at 20,000 feet I was going way too fast for this maneuver. You should bleed off some air speed before doing this maneuver, and I didn't. Instead of 150, I was going 250 and I just rolled over and started after him. I went straight to the ground as I couldn't pull out of the dive.

I had never heard the word compressibility until after the dive. These planes weren't designed to go through the sound barrier and where these planes approach the speed of sound the air builds up in front of the wings. You know what gives the lift on a plane is the vacuum created under the wing when the air molecules split and the ones going over the top have to go faster than the ones on the bottom thus creating the vacuum. This happens as you approach the speed of sound. The newer jet planes that were designed to break the sound barriers had wings with a thin, knife like leading edge in contrast to the several inch thick leading edge of the plane I flew.

Anyway, I couldn't pull out of the dive and I bailed out. In fact I couldn't even get the canopy open and going straight down I got panicky and thought sure I was still going to be in there when it hit the ground. I looked up and saw the big red tag that says, "Pull for Emergency Release." I pulled it and the canopy blew off and I was sucked out into the air and missed the tail and I ended up in a tree. I was still floating in the air when the plane hit the ground. Of course you only fall 120 miles an hour and this plane was going nearly 500 miles an hour. When I got out I felt like I was going the other way. It just ran off and left me. If I had really been cool and calm I would have waited until I slowed down. It wouldn't take long, a few seconds to slow down but as soon as I found that rip cord I pulled it. Well, one GI shoe, laced at the ankle, was pulled off, the oxygen mask was ripped off too. I lost that and the opening shock split the parachute almost in half. Half of it was closed almost all the way down. I look up and this half was closed and I was swinging back and forth and one half was closed and the other half was open all the way down. As the open half would close, the closed half would open.

Well, anyway I ended up in a tree in the woods in Maryland. I climbed out of the 'chute and dropped to the ground. On the way down I saw a road and I walked to that road. Some guy picked me up in a truck and took me to this little town. I called the airfield and then they came and got me.

They put me in a hospital for a few days for observation. I had a big bump on my head. That first night this major somebody came in there all mad and asked me, "Did I know how much the plane cost?" He had a clipboard and a paper that he wanted me to sign. I said, "What's that, sir?" He said, "You don't want to be in the airforce anymore do you? You want to be transferred to the infantry. That's what you want isn't it." That's what I wanted at the time but I said, "Oh no, sir, I want to fly." He said, "Ah that's smart boy," and patted me on the back! "We'll have you flying again in no time." Couple days later I was flying again.

[The tape continues with Mr. Wurmser explaining different pictures. The following are significant quotes to Mr. Wurmser's story.]

Mr. Wurmser: I never did anything with the USO.

Father Powers always assured us he knew certain Jewish prayers if we needed him.

The look Jewish thing. I had red hair, got sunburned, open cockpit. My nose always peeling.

Frank: Were there a lot of soldiers who went to services on Sunday?

Mr. Wurmser: Most of them did. They'd go to church on Sunday morning. They'd have church services. They would announce that there would be a service. I know I went to one one time with one of the guys who was maybe from an Orthodox upbringing. He'd conduct a service. They'd have *tallises* on. I wasn't used to that. But for the most part, I didn't take part.

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