

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"A DREAM BECOMING A REALITY"

The mission of our National Museum of American Jewish Military History has been consistent since it was chartered by Congress more than 50 years ago – to show both non-Jews and Jews “that” and “how” Jewish Americans have served in the military of the United States. But how best can our museum tell that reality?

P.N.C. Robert M. Zweiman had a dream (and if you know “Bob,” he has a habit of making his dreams come true). It was his vision that our story would best be told by a permanent core exhibit. “The exhibit – designed to appeal to all religions and cultural backgrounds – would cover the whole span of Jewish service

in the American military, from the Colonial period to the present day.” The uniqueness of the project is its bells and whistles – sights and sounds – appealing to children as well as adults.

Bob, with the help of P.N.C. Ed Goldwasser and the Department of New York, had an initial creative and design study done. It came back as a display of merit, and beauty; but with a price tag in excess of \$600,000.00. My reaction, as we say in Miami, was “no way José.” Others were more emphatic in their inability to digest the amount. Nevertheless, things of worth often cost money. Bob persisted.

Bob enlisted Jeffrey Greenhut, a J.W.V. member and a profession-

al military historian. With the title of “Development Director of the Museum,” in hand, Jeff went to work. His efforts and diligence have now succeeded. Recently, we received a grant of \$100,000.00 from a private individual, who obviously believes in both our mission and the Exhibit. The grant in part is conditioned on matching funds – and this aspect of our fundraising effort is well underway.

In mid-January letters will go out to all echelons, and all friends who believe it is important to preserve and tell the story that Jews really did serve in the military of the United States of America, asking for financial support. Those



PNC DAVID L. MAGIDSON
President, NMAJMH

Jewish Americans who served and those who died should not have sacrificed in anonymity! Please help!

It is your obligation to make this proof a reality.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES By Pamela Elbe

Collections Manager/Archivist NMAJMH

The NMAJMH has a wonderful collection of mementos, photographs, and archival materials pertaining to Jewish service in the American armed forces, but, as with most other museums, we are only able to present a small portion of this material at a time. We created an exhibition, *Hidden Treasures: Selections from Our Permanent Collection*, to highlight all of the interesting items that have been donated to the Museum over the years. Material in this exhibit changes regularly so that we may display as much of our collection as possible, and we are now in the process of updating the exhibition to include memorabilia and photographs relating to William Shemin, a World War I veteran.

William Shemin was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for heroic conduct under fire during World War I. The official citation reads: “For extraordinary heroism in action on the Vesle River, near Bazoches, August 7, 8, and 9, 1918. Sergeant Shemin, upon three different occasions, left over and crossed an open space of 150 yards, exposed to heavy machine-gun fire to rescue the wounded. After officers and senior noncommissioned officers had become casualties, Sergeant Shemin took com-



mand of the platoon and displayed great initiative under fire until wounded August 9.”

Shemin’s family has long felt that he was overlooked for the Medal of Honor because of anti-Semitism, and their perseverance has led to HR 5371, the William Shemin Jewish World War I Veterans Act. The bill would review the case of Sgt. William Shemin, and other World

War I heroes, claiming they may have been deprived of the recognition they deserved because of racial or religious discrimination. In recognition of Shemin’s heroism the Museum is currently displaying a small selection of his memorabilia, including his Distinguished Service Cross.

In addition to the certificates and medals awarded for Shemin’s military service and valor, the exhibition also includes artifacts that focus on another aspect of his life – his great athleticism. Shemin was a member of the American Expeditionary Forces baseball team, and displayed are photos of his team and the cleats that he wore. The materials exhibited provide a small glimpse into the life of this World War I hero. Visit the Museum to learn more about William Shemin and other American Jews who have proudly served their country.

“When a person walks through this museum he just doesn’t read facts and see pictures. He looks into a window of the first and second world wars. He gets to see the life that men and women had to lead. This experience is one I will not forget.”

- C. Sanders, Boy Scout Troop 532

Administratively Speaking By Mary Westley, Asst. Administrator



Marcia F. Waldstreicher, our newest intern and a University of Maryland University College Student majoring in History, is our new museum docent and library assistant. Her enthusiastic style and genuine desire to learn and share provide the perfect fit. She has proven to be a valuable team player by suggesting ideas and implementing them for a Veterans' storytime /tour to be presented to a local Men's group. Marcia's interview with Seymour Greene (one of the lecturers for the event, is noted below). Welcome Aboard Marcia!

An Interview with Seymour Greene

By Marcia F. Waldstreicher

Seymour Greene, now age 90, was drafted directly into Special Services when he was 22, having been a professional musician playing the trombone, for over five years. As part of the orchestra for "This is the Army," the travelling military musical, Seymour traveled all over the world providing fun and boosting the morale of US soldiers, sailors, and airmen everywhere.

While working with many other Jews in show business, including the creator of the show himself, Irving Berlin, it wasn't hard for Mr. Greene to share his beliefs with others. He tried to go to prayer services whenever he could, and even tried to gather a minyan so those who wanted to mourn their deceased loved ones could do so. My two favorite stories of his hap-

pened in two very different places.

The first revolves around the town of Naples, one of Italy's and the world's oldest cities. While in Naples, Seymour tried to visit as many synagogues as he could, many having been there for centuries. During one of these forays, he encountered a unit of Palestinian troops. They were Jews fighting for the British military, trying to make sure that Jews had a homeland to come to if they survived the carnage.

The second story takes place in Tehran, home to what sounds like a strange population. Jews from all over Europe had fled to Muslim lands to escape the Nazi and Soviet regimes, in hopes they would be accepted. After finding this small subset of the Jewish community in Tehran, Mr. Greene and his fellow Jewish performers were invited to share a traditional Russian meal.

Seymour told me that he had wonderful

Jewish encounters everywhere he went, but he was still eager to go home to his family. Judaism places a very high value on the family and its importance in everyday life. Going around the world was great, but being at home with his family was even better.

We wish to thank everyone who supported the museum this year, both in deed and dollar.

To those of you who forwarded your service records so that our archives would be more complete, or who lectured about the museum and displayed our traveling displays at a local library or school, and those who sent your proceeds from a "chai money can" stationed by your front door, we want you to know that everything counts. You count. And we thank you.

Mary Westley

From Our Archives By Mike Rugel

Assistant Collections Manager/NMAJMH

The stories of Jews in American military history are often the stories of immigrants. Military service provided a way for many to "become American" more quickly. The experience of father and son Max and Fred (born Fritz) Levi testifies to this. The Levis were from Glauberg, Germany. Max had served there with honor in the German 422nd Infantry Regiment in the First World War, receiving multiple decorations. When the course of Germany under Nazi rule became clear, the family left for the U.S. in 1936.



In April 1944, Fred was about to turn 18 and wanted to enlist in the U.S. Navy to fight against the country where he spent his first ten years. He was initially unable to enlist because of hang-ups in the family's naturalization process. His status remained enemy alien. Trying to assist his son's effort to enlist, Max wrote to the Immigration and Naturalization Service: "Fred, with our consent, wished to prove his loyalty and devotion to the country of our adoption and to repay in this way, his part of our debt, which we owe to our new homeland. He is very eager to enter this branch of the armed force(s)..."

INS responded and expedited the Levy case. Fred enlisted on May 11, 1944, the day before his 18th birthday. He entered service a week later. Fred trained as a U.S. Navy fireman. By July 11th, he was able to send his father a picture postcard showing that he was the "Pride of the U.S. Navy" who had the Axis powers quaking in fear. Fred Levi served for over two years, mostly aboard the attack transport USS Renville



(APA-227). The American WWII memorabilia of Fred Levi sits with his father's German WWI objects in the museum's collection, helping to illustrate the experience of Jews in the military and that of the American immigrant.