

Jewish Medal of Honor Recipients

West Point Jewish Chapel Fund
New York, New York



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Jewish Medal of Honor Recipients

This book is dedicated to all members of the Jewish faith who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America and to tell the stories of those who have received the nation's highest award for valor—the Medal of Honor. The book is intended to accompany the display of the Jewish Medal of Honor recipients in the Jewish Chapel at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States. It is awarded for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. The President of the United States normally presents the Medal to the recipient or family member in the case of those killed in action or deceased. The Medal of Honor was first approved in 1862.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation chartering the “Congressional Medal of Honor Society” (CMOH) to create a bond of brotherhood and comradeship among all living recipients of the Medal of Honor. The CMOH Society then created the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation to support and perpetuate the legacy of the Medal of Honor and its Recipients. The award itself is called the Medal of Honor, and does not include the word Congressional.

The West Point Jewish Chapel was constructed with private funds and proffered to the U.S. Military Academy in 1984 by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The Fund continues to support the Jewish cadets and maintains the artifacts and art work in the chapel that have been donated over the years. The Fund is proud of the Jewish contributions to the Armed Forces and to honor those of the Jewish faith that have received the Medal of Honor.

Lt. Col. Robert D. Wolff, PhD, P.E., USAR (Ret.)
Curator, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund

CIVIL WAR

April 12, 1861 – June 2, 1865

ABRAHAM COHN

Sergeant Major, U.S. Army

BORN: June 17, 1832, Guttentag, Silesia, Prussia
DATES OF ACTION: May 6, 1864, Wilderness Campaign
and July 30, 1864, Petersburg, VA
DIED: June 2, 1897
BURIED: Cypress Hills Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY



THIS PAGE
RIGHT: Cohn with his family.
TOP: Abraham Cohn
BOTTOM: Early photo of the color guard
of the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers.



OPPOSITE PAGE
TOP: Burial of Federal dead,
Fredericksburg, VA. (May 19 or 20, 1864)
MIDDLE: The Battle of the
Wilderness, VA. (May 5-6, 1864)
BOTTOM: Siege of Petersburg



Abraham Cohn was born in the East Prussian town of Guttentag in what is now considered to be Poland. He came to the United States by way of New York at the age of 28, when there was a flood of German Jewish immigration. Cohn enlisted as a Private in Company E, 6th NH Volunteers in Campton, New Hampshire on January 5, 1864 to fight for the Union. Within 18 months of his service, Cohn rose to the rank of 1st Lieutenant.

His first military engagement for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor occurred in May of 1864, when he was helping to guard the rebuilt Orange & Alexandria Railroad from Manassas Junction south to Rappahannock Station. The Battle of the Wilderness, Ulysses Grant's first attempt to use consolidated forces of the Union to destroy Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, began in two locations along this line. As the battle raged on, General Wadsworth on the Union side fell mortally wounded while trying to rally his troops. His loss caused those who remained to flee the battle, but it was at this time, it is believed, that Cohn, with the 6th New Hampshire, rallied those troops to stay together, under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Pearson, CO, 6th New Hampshire. Cohn's efforts brought the counteroffensive to a standstill.

He ended his service with the 6th New Hampshire on July 17th, 1865, and moved to New York City where he married, had eight children, and became active in business affairs.

CITATION

During Battle of the Wilderness rallied and formed, under heavy fire, disorganized and fleeing troops of different regiments. At Petersburg, Va., 30 July 1864, bravely and coolly carried orders to the advanced line under severe fire.

EUGENE PHILIP JACOBSON

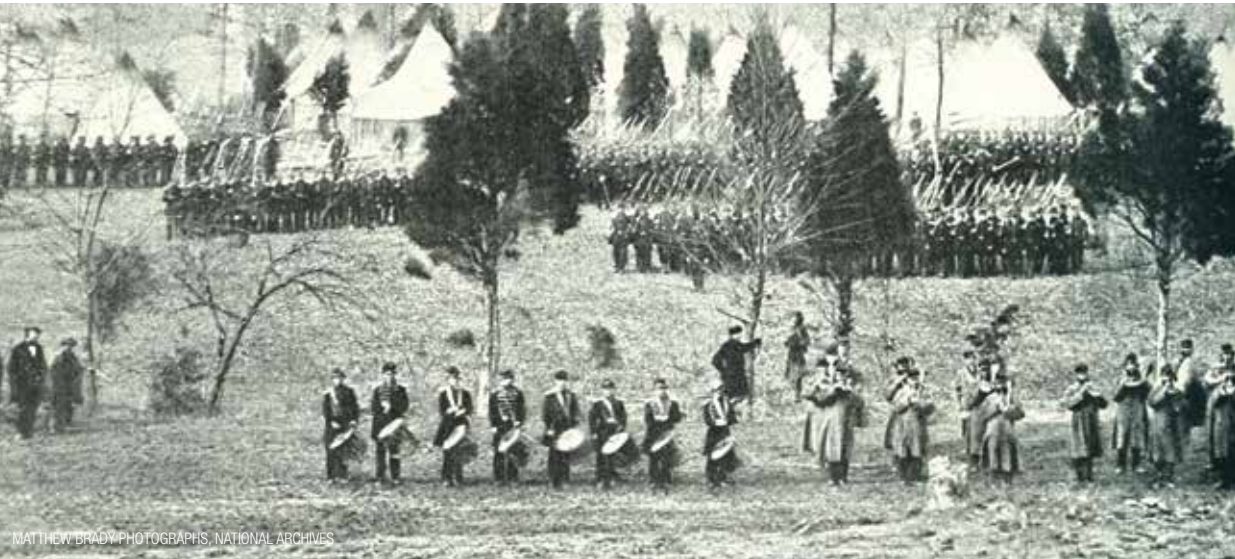
Sergeant Major, U.S. Army

BORN: May 3, 1841, Prussia (now Poland)

DATE OF ACTION: May 2, 1863, Chancellorsville, VA

DIED: April 12, 1881

BURIED: Green Mount Cemetery, Baltimore, MD



CITATION

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Sergeant Major Eugene Philip Jacobson, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 2 May 1863, while serving with 74th New York Infantry, in action at Chancellorsville, Virginia, for bravery in conducting a scouting party in front of the enemy.

TOP LEFT: Members of the 74th New York Volunteer Infantry drilling during training in camp. (1861)

TOP RIGHT: SGM Eugene Philip Jacobson, 74th Regiment, New York Volunteer Infantry, received the Medal of Honor in 1865 for courageous actions May 2, 1863 in the Battle of Chancellorsville.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Fourth of July Parade on Larimar St. Denver, Colorado in 1868. Jacobson moved to Denver in 1872 where he opened a law practice that thrived as Denver grew and Colorado became a state in 1876.

Eugene Philip Jacobson was born May 3, 1841, in Pakosc, a Jewish community in the Posen province of Prussia, part of the German Empire then under Polish control. At 19, the well-educated, multilingual businessman emigrated to the U.S. shortly before the Civil War began in 1861. He was well-educated and spoke several languages when he arrived in the U.S. shortly before the Civil War began in 1861. After President Lincoln issued an urgent call for troops to stop the northern advance of the Confederate Army, Jacobson joined a surge of New York immigrants volunteering to defend their adopted homeland. He enlisted in the 74th New York Infantry Regiment of the Army of the Potomac, earning praise for bravery and skill on Virginia battlefields. He quickly rose through the ranks from Private to Corporal, Sergeant Major, 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Lieutenant, with an honorary promotion to Brevet Captain.

He is best known for his actions the night of May 2, 1863, during the Battle of Chancellorsville, for which he received the Medal of Honor. Under attack in a dark, wooded area, Union military commanders were getting conflicting reports about the enemy’s position and movements. Jacobson volunteered to lead a team through the forest, getting close enough to hear shouts when Confederate General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson was shot by friendly fire. The strategic intelligence Jacobson’s team brought back about the enemy’s location did not win the battle, but enabled the Union Army to hold vital positions and reinforce troop strength.

In 1864, Jacobson was off the battlefield receiving treatment for an injury in Washington, D.C. While hospitalized, he started writing letters applying to work at federal agencies. Later that year, he was honorably discharged from the Army and started working in a diplomatic bureau of the State Department, and began studying law. In 1867, Jacobson passed the bar exam, and in 1870, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed him to the District Attorney’s office in Southern Mississippi, where he prosecuted cases against the Ku Klux Klan.

After marrying Anna W. Goldsborough in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1872, the newlyweds moved to Denver, Colorado, where he opened a law practice. In 1880, Jacobson was elected to the new Colorado State Senate to push for railway regulations, a battle he would not live long enough to see won. On April 12, 1881, Jacobson, 39, died from a congestive illness.

LEOPOLD KARPELES

Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: September 9, 1838, Prague, Bohemia (Now Czech Republic)

DATE OF ACTION: May 6, 1864, Wilderness Campaign, VA

DIED: February 2, 1909

BURIED: Washington, D.C.

CITATION

While color bearer, rallied the retreating troops and induced them to check the enemy's advance.

THIS PAGE

RIGHT: Rabbi Simon Mundheim, Washington Hebrew Congregation

TOP: Karpeles wearing the Medal of Honor.

BOTTOM: Women of Washington Hebrew Congregation took care of wounded soldiers in nearby wartime hospitals such as this one at Independence Ave. and 7th St., SW.



JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER WASHINGTON

OPPOSITE PAGE

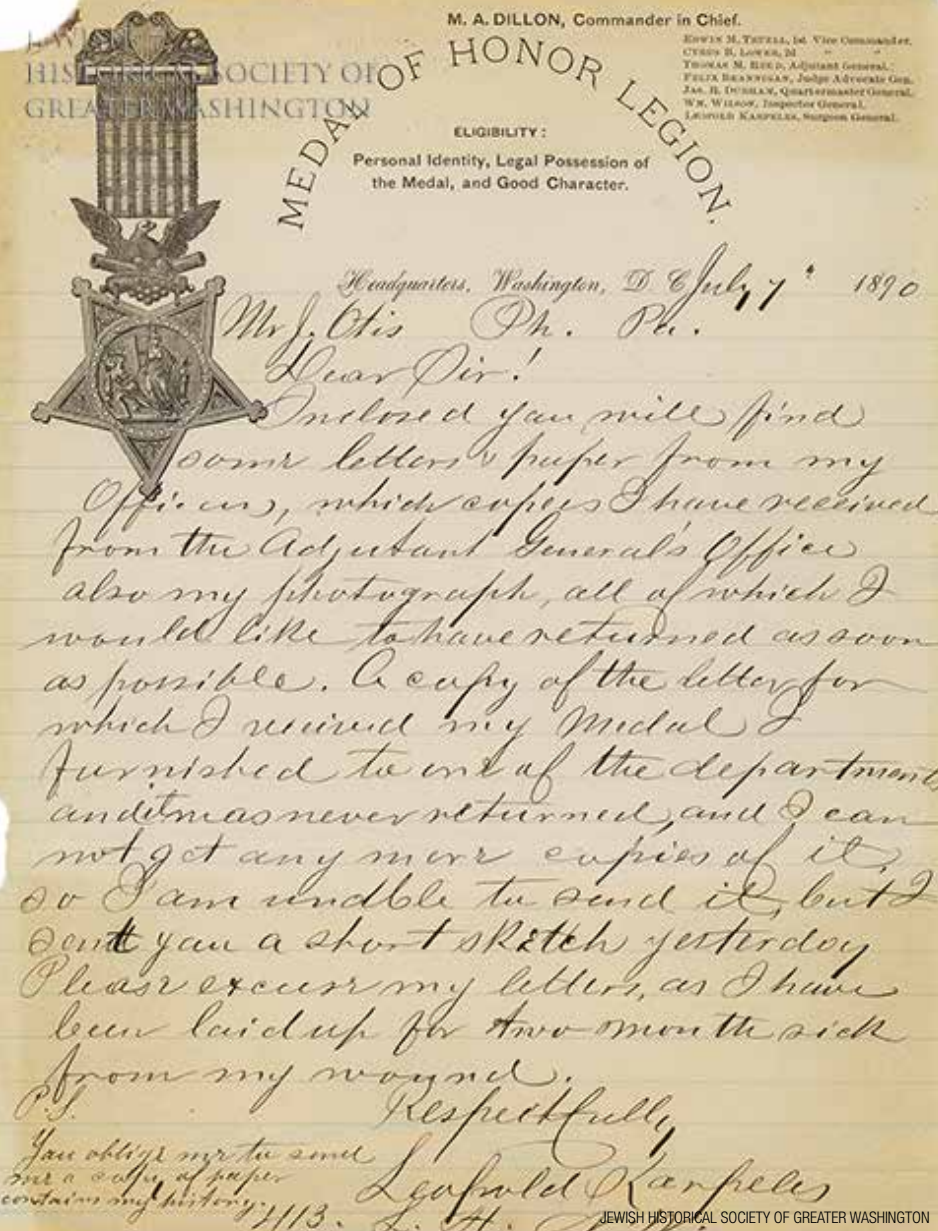
TOP: On stationery of the Medal of Honor Legion, Karpeles wrote this letter concerning his military pension. (1890)

BOTTOM LEFT: Washington Hebrew Congregation, 8th and I Streets, NW. (circa 1890)

BOTTOM RIGHT: A depiction of Karpeles carrying the flag of the Massachusetts 57th Regiment during the Battle of the Wilderness. (May 6, 1894)



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION



JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF GREATER WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION COLLECTIONS



JEWISH-AMERICAN HALL OF FAME

Leopold Karpeles was born in Prague, Bohemia on September 9, 1838. At the age of 11, he moved to Galveston Texas with his older brother Emil. Several years later, Leopold, who was outspoken about his anti-slavery views, moved to Springfield, Massachusetts and enlisted in the Union Army as a flag bearer.

On April 17, 1864, he left New England with the 57th Massachusetts regiment as a sergeant to go south to meet the enemy. They passed through Washington and President Lincoln before arriving at the Wilderness, Virginia, where General Grant hoped to take the first steps toward taking over Richmond. It was then that he was part of the Battle of the Wilderness and where he won his Medal of Honor for rallying retreating troops while under heavy fire. According to eyewitnesses, Color Sergeant Karpeles stood on a tree stump to make the Union colors more visible and, despite many bullet holes in the regimental colors, was uninjured. Karpeles was instrumental in turning the tide of the May 1864 Wilderness Campaign, which some historians consider the turning point of the Civil War, when the North began its slow march toward victory.

Karpeles was in many more battles after this one, and got wounded so severely he ended up in Mount Pleasant General Hospital in Washington, DC. It was there that he met Rabbi Simon Mundheim of the Washington Hebrew Congregation. Mundheim was a chaplain for the Union Army and would visit the wounded soldiers along with his wife Hannah and two daughters, Henrietta and Sarah, where they would read to them and help them write letters. It was on one of these visits where Sarah and Leopold met and fell in love. They married and he became a clerk in the U.S. Postal Department.

Five years after they were first married, Sarah and their third baby died in childbirth. Sarah's sister Henrietta came in to help take care of the children, and ended up marrying Leopold and together they had six children. Leopold Karpeles died in February of 1909 and was buried in the cemetery of Washington Hebrew Congregation. His tombstone is unique, with a replica of the Medal of Honor emblazoned on its granite surface.

BENJAMIN BENNETT LEVY

Private, U.S. Army

BORN: February 22, 1845, New York, NY

DATE OF ACTION: June 30, 1862, Glendale, VA

DIED: July 20, 1921

BURIED: Brooklyn, NY

CITATION

This soldier, a drummer boy, took the gun of a sick comrade, went into the fight, and when the color bearers were shot down, carried the colors and saved them from capture.

THIS PAGE

RIGHT: An example in lithograph form showing a color bearer the day after battle.

TOP: Benjamin Levy

BOTTOM: Drum corps of 61st New York Infantry, Falmouth, VA. (Nov. 1862-April 1863)



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OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP LEFT: The positions of the Union and Confederate Armies during the Battle of Glendale and the Battle of White Oak Swamp. (June-July 1862)

TOP RIGHT: State of VA historic marker named for Levy outside of Glendale, VA.

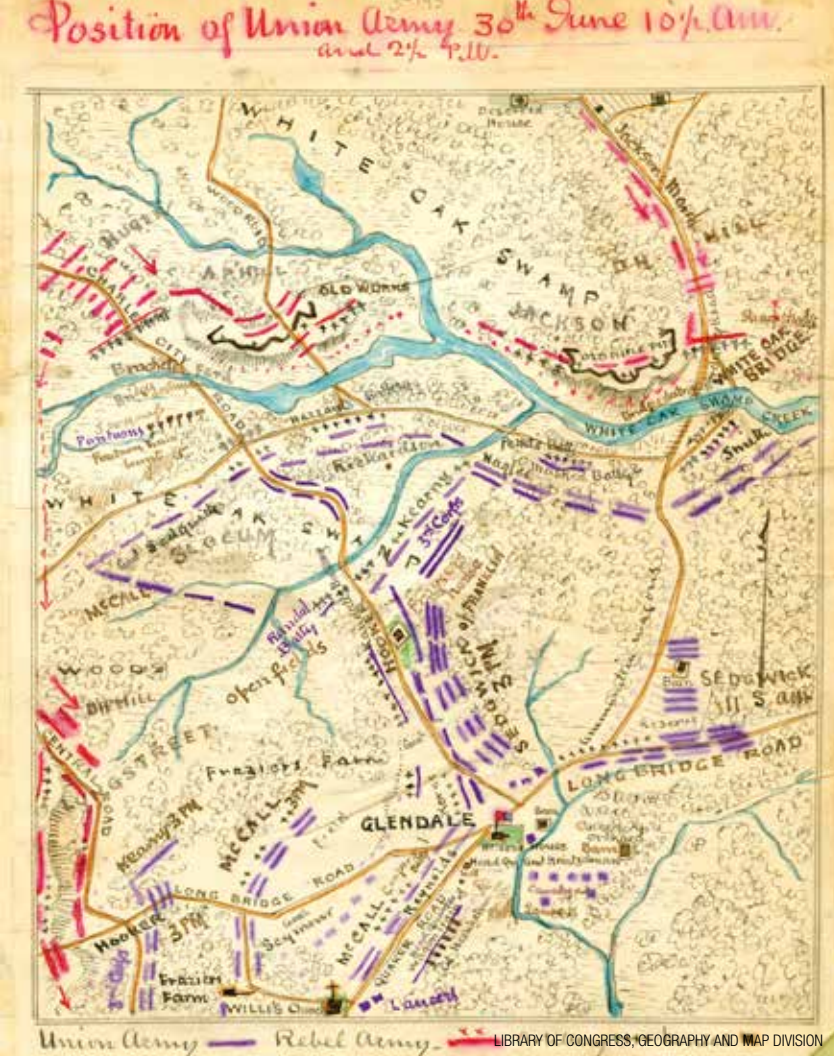
BOTTOM: Lincoln's Call for Volunteers published in Harper's Weekly magazine. (April 1861)



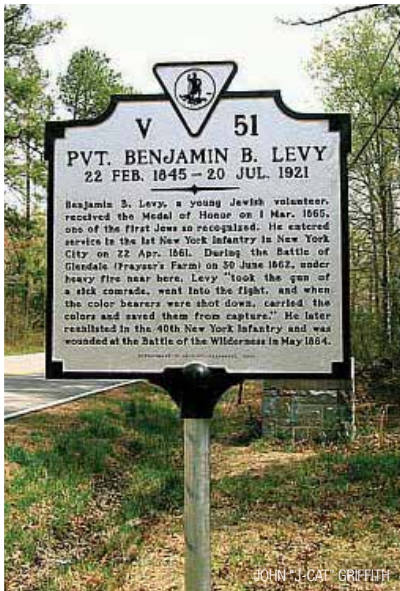
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DIVISION



JOHN F. LOAL CREATION

LINCOLN'S CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Published in Harper's Weekly



REPRODUCED FROM HARPER'S WEEKLY (PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADY)

DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE. THE CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS.

THE Secretary of War has addressed the following circular to the Governors of States: "WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, April -, 1861. "SIR,—Under the Act of Congress for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections; repel invasions, etc., approved February 28, 1795, I have the honor to request your Excellency to cause to be immediately detached from the militia of your State the quota designated in the table below, to serve as infantry or riflemen for the period of three months, unless sooner discharged.

" Your Excellency will please communicate to me the time at or about which your quota will be expected at its rendezvous, as it will be met as soon as practicable by an officer or officers to muster it into the service and pay of the United States. At the same time the oath of fidelity to the United States will be administered to every officer and man.

" The mustering officer will be instructed to receive no man under the rank of commissioned officer who is in years apparently over forty-five or under eighteen, or who is not in physical strength and vigor."

CREATIVE COMMONS NONCOMMERCIAL-SHAREALIKE LICENSE

On April 12th, 1861, President Lincoln issued the call for volunteers to “Save the Union” and put down the rebellion. **Benjamin Levy** was one to answer that call. He enlisted as a drummer boy with the 1st NY Infantry Regiment, stationed in Newport News, Virginia, at barely 16 years of age. Drummer boys were key communication for the armies, calling for assembly and reflecting orders and instruction.

The most dangerous assignment was the flag or “Color” bearer. Fighting occurred on open fields, and soldiers from either side would line up and shoot directly at each other. Smoke from the gunpowder created such a haze that the only thing you could see was the flags or “colors,” which was essential to knowing where the frontline of battle stood.

During the Battle of Glendale on June 30th, 1862, Levy saw the color bearer Charley Mahorn, of the 1st New York, fall from a bullet wound. As men were staggering and dying around him, Levy jumped to action and grabbed the fallen colors, raising them bravely. This heartened his regiment and this skinny, Jewish drummer boy saved them from likely total destruction.

After the regiment’s two years’ service expired, he re-enlisted in the 40th New York regiment and was discharged when he was wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864. In 1865, Levy was one of at least six Jews honored during the Civil war, and may have been the first American Jew to receive America’s highest recognition of bravery, the Medal of Honor.

DAVID ORBANSKY

Private, U.S. Army

BORN: 1843, Lautenberg, Prussia (Now Poland)

DATES OF ACTION: 1862, Shiloh TN and 1863, Vicksburg, MS

DIED: January 22, 1897

BURIED: Cincinnati, Ohio

CITATION

Gallantry in actions.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, FROM HAVEN TO HOME:
350 YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA EXHIBITION



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY

ABOVE LEFT: Medal of Honor presented to
Orbanski [sic] by Congress. (1843-1897)

ABOVE: Private David Urbansky

RIGHT: Orbansky gravestone at
Walnut Hills cemetery, Cincinnati, OH



JEWISH CEMETERIES OF GREATER CINCINNATI



JACOB RADAR MARCUS, CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES OF CINCINNATI, OHIO



UNKNOWN



OHIO HISTORY CONNECTION

TOP: Orbansky, center, reading while his unit,
Company B, 58th Ohio Volunteer Infantry,
relaxes in camp. (1863)

MIDDLE: Postcard street scene, Piqua, Ohio

LEFT: "National Colors of the 58th O.V.I.,"
in the Ohio Civil War.

Aaron “David” Urbansky immigrated to America with his parents in 1857. He was originally a cabinetmaker, but after living several years in New York state, he moved to Columbus, Ohio to start a mercantile business.

Six months after the Civil War broke out, he enlisted with the Columbus B, 58th Ohio Volunteers even though he was not a U.S. citizen. He served for more than three years and saw action in at least 15 battles with Union forces commanded by General Ulysses S. Grant.

During the Siege of Vicksburg (May 18 to July 4, 1863) his regiment participated in attacking one of the last remaining Confederate strongholds on the Mississippi River. During this battle, when his superior officer was badly wounded and out in the open, Urbansky, who was no more than 5 feet 3 inches tall, ran through heavy fire to carry him back to safety. The officer survived.

He was discharged from the army with the rank of corporal in January 1865 just before the war ended. Soon after, he applied for and was quickly granted his U.S. citizenship. He then married Rachel Henry in a Jewish ceremony in Schenectady, New York. They settled in Piqua, Ohio where he became the owner of a successful clothing store and raised twelve children.

David served in the army and became a citizen under the name “Orbansky.” He married as Urbansky, which continued to be his name until, after a long illness, he died at the age of 54 and was buried in Piqua’s Cedar Hill Jewish cemetery. After his death, his family moved to Cincinnati and shortened the family name to Urban. When his widow, Rachel, died in 1914, she was interred in Walnut Hills cemetery and the family had Urbansky’s remains moved to Cincinnati and placed next to her.

INDIAN WARS

1866 – 1890

SIMON SUHLER

Private, U.S. Army (Under the Name of Charles Gardner)

BORN: 1844, Bavaria, Germany

DATE OF ACTION: August – October 1868, Arizona

DIED: May 16, 1895

BURIED: San Antonio, TX

CITATION

Bravery in scouts and actions against Indians.

THIS PAGE

RIGHT: An ad in German recruiting for the Indiana Regiment. (1861)

TOP: Lithograph of Simon Suhler by Jose Cisneros. (Based on the physical description in his service records and a photograph of his brother.)

BOTTOM: Suhler's gravestone at San Antonio National Cemetery, TX



UNKNOWN

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: Battle of Chickamauga (Sept. 19-20, 1863)

MIDDLE: United States Army Poster illustrating uniforms of the United States Cavalry during the Indian Wars. (1876)

BOTTOM: Temple Emanu-El in downtown Dallas, where Suhler's brother Aaron was the congregation's first Rabbi. (1876)



NATIONAL MUSEUM AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



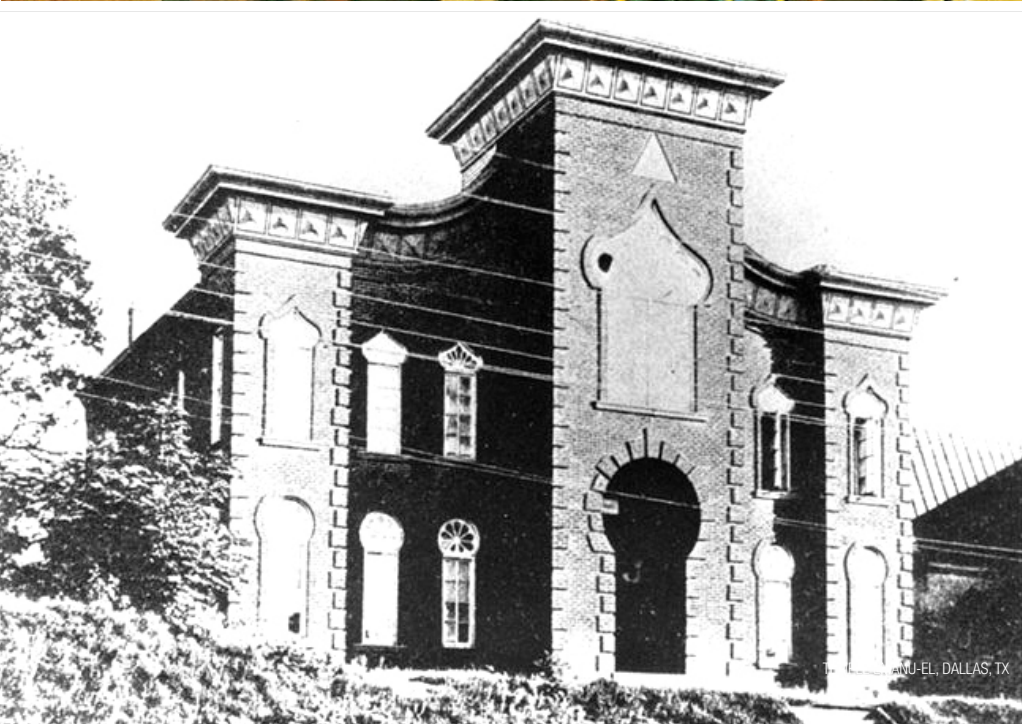
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PAUL T. BOWMAN



JOHN EDWARD STARK THE TEXAS UNDERGROUND BLOG



EMU-EL, DALLAS, TX

Simon Suhler was born in 1844 and emigrated to the U.S. between 1858 and 1861, where he enlisted with the 32nd Indiana Volunteers. During his time with the 32nd Indiana Volunteers he was wounded at the knee in Shiloh and captured at the Battle of Chickamauga. He was later released in Vicksburg, Mississippi and recovered in two Union hospitals. He then apparently disappeared and was classified as a deserter.

On June 9, 1863, he re-enlisted in a regiment of the New York Heavy Artillery, but this time under his mother's maiden name of Newstattel. He served in that unit until he was discharged on Sept. 26, 1865.

Suhler then went to San Francisco and joined the 8th Cavalry on Oct. 15, 1866 under yet another name, Charles Gardner. With this Cavalry he was sent to fight Apaches in Arizona. For his bravery in fighting Native Americans, he was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1868. He was also recommended for a promotion to second lieutenant, but left the military on September 6, 1878.

Suhler's brother Aron arrived in the United States in 1872 and soon became the first Reform rabbi of Dallas, Fort Worth and Waco, Texas. Unlike Simon, who never married, his brother had seven children. Suhler moved to San Antonio, perhaps to be closer to his brother, and sold assorted products including produce, sewing machines and lightning rods. He was also the deputy county assessor and a bookkeeper, and adjutant of the August Belknap Post, No. 37, Grand Army of the Republic.

In 1890, he successfully got the desertion charged expunged from his record, but was still not able to get a disability pension for his many wounds, likely because of the confusion of so many name changes. He died in San Antonio on May 16, 1895 at the age of 51.

His life remains clouded in mystery, as no photo of him has ever been found. No one knows why he had so many name changes, why he chose the name Charles Gardner, or why he initially deserted the military.

MILITARY OCCUPATION OF HAITI

1915 – 1934

SAMUEL GROSS

Private, U.S. Marine Corps

BORN: May 9, 1891, Philadelphia, PA (as Samuel Marguilies)

DATE OF ACTION: November 17, 1915, Fort Riviere, Haiti

DIED: September 13, 1934

BURIED: Philadelphia, PA



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS, QUANTICO, VA



NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER



NATIONAL ARCHIVES



ABOVE: USS Connecticut (BB-18)

LEFT: Smedley D. Butler (1910)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION



NAVAL HISTORICAL FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, D.C. COLLECTION OF ADMIRAL WILLIAM B. CHERTON

TOP: “Fort Riviere - Haiti 1915,” by Col. Donna Neary (Ret.), Oil on Canvas. Samuel Gross on far right. (1989)

MIDDLE: U.S. Marines in Action at Port au Prince, Haiti. (1918)

BOTTOM: Commander Cruiser Squadron, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, with Philippe S. Dartiguenave, President of Haiti, on board USS Washington. (July 1915)

Samuel Gross was born and raised Samuel Marguiles in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1913, he ran away from home to join the Marines. At the time of enlistment, he gave his birthday as May 9, 1891, but his birth year was probably closer to 1897. Initially, his primary job in the Marines was to serve as an orderly for General Smedley Butler and care for his children, which he did with great dedication and care.

It was during the United States occupation of Haiti that he participated in battles against the Caco bandit insurgency. During the particular battle for Fort Riviere, on November 17th, 1915, General Butler needed to get information about the enemy. He realized the only way in was to enter the fort. In later reports, Butler said, “I asked for volunteers and selected two men to go with me. One was Samuel Gross, ‘a gallant lad.’ We were to enter this pipe, crawl the length of it, with the possibility the defenders would be (able) to shoot at us as soon as we were seen.” All three men received Medals of Honor.

After this incident, Gross returned to the United States in 1917 and was honorably discharged. He then reenlisted with the Marines, but there is no record of his activities. Gross suffered from various war wounds and epilepsy. He died in 1934 in a Veteran’s Hospital in Philadelphia. By time of death, though everyone knew his real name, he was officially buried as Samuel Gross in Har-Nebo Jewish Cemetery in Philadelphia.

WORLD WAR I

June 28, 1914 – November 11, 1918

SYDNEY G. GUMPERTZ

First Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: October 24, 1879, San Raphael, CA
DATE OF ACTION: September 29, 1918, Bois-de-Forges, France
DIED: February 16, 1971
BURIED: Farmingdale, NY

CITATION

When the advancing line was held up by machinegun fire, 1st Sgt. Gumpertz left the platoon of which he was in command and started with 2 other soldiers through a heavy barrage toward the machinegun nest. His 2 companions soon became casualties from bursting shells, but 1st Sgt. Gumpertz continued on alone in the face of direct fire from the machinegun, jumped into the nest and silenced the gun, capturing 9 of the crew.

THIS PAGE

TOP: Sydney Gumpertz

BOTTOM: General Pershing bestowing an honor on Gumpertz in an unidentified ceremony.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: General Pershing conferring the Medal of Honor on A.E.F. men.

MIDDLE: Medal of Honor winners, including Gumpertz, pose with General Pershing and his staff at Chaumont. (Gumpertz 2nd from bottom right)

BOTTOM: A Jewish war veterans group ceremony, with Gumpertz (second from left) and Benjamin Kaufman (second from right).



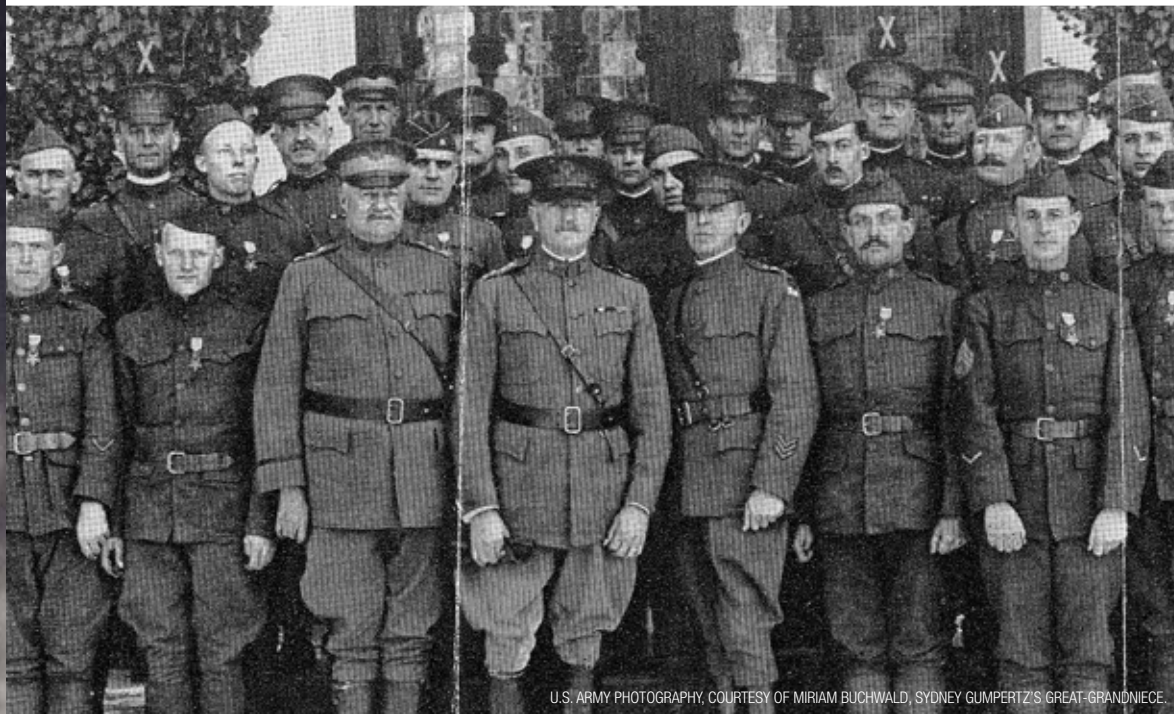
COURTESY OF MIRIAM BUCHWALD, SYDNEY GUMPERTZ'S GREAT-GRANDNIECE.



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COURTESY OF MIRIAM BUCHWALD, SYDNEY GUMPERTZ'S GREAT-GRANDNIECE.



U.S. ARMY PHOTOGRAPHY, COURTESY OF MIRIAM BUCHWALD, SYDNEY GUMPERTZ'S GREAT-GRANDNIECE.



COURTESY OF MIRIAM BUCHWALD, SYDNEY GUMPERTZ'S GREAT-GRANDNIECE.

Sydney Gumpertz was born in San Rafael, California to Gustave and Julia Arndt Gumpertz. His maternal grandparents had fled Germany in the 1848 revolution, crossed the plains and settled in Stockton California in 1850. Sydney graduated Stockton California High School and married Anna Light in 1915 in Chicago, Illinois.

One afternoon in July 1917 on Michigan Boulevard, the couple began listening to a uniformed man speak from a wagon. The country had been at war for several months, and Gumpertz realized, at the age of 38, he wanted to go to war.

He enlisted the next day but found out he had a hernia and couldn't go. Doctors performed an operation to repair the hernia and he was sworn into service while in bed.

Gumpertz became a first sergeant of Company E of the 132nd Infantry, which crossed the Atlantic in May of 1918 and landed in France. After winning his Medal of Honor during his service in Bois de Forges, he wrote to his family and said, "You cannot realize what a wonderful thing it is to receive the Medal of Honor. No matter where you go you are a marked man and everybody is mighty proud to shake hands with you whether he is a General or a buck private."

After the war, he settled in New York, where he was commander of the S. Rankin Drew Post of the American Legion in New York and edited the Legion Annual for five years. In February 1921, he was named commander of the Jewish Valor Legion, which was formed to counter the sentiments that American Jews were not patriotic, ideas circulated by Henry Ford. In 1934, he wrote "The Jewish Legion of Valor," telling stories of individual Jews who fought for the United States since the Revolutionary War. He was also later involved in the real estate and advertising businesses. He died at the age of 91.

BENJAMIN KAUFMAN

First Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: March 10, 1894, Buffalo, NY

DATE OF ACTION: October 4, 1918, Argonne Forest, France

DIED: February 5, 1981

BURIED: Trenton, NJ

CITATION

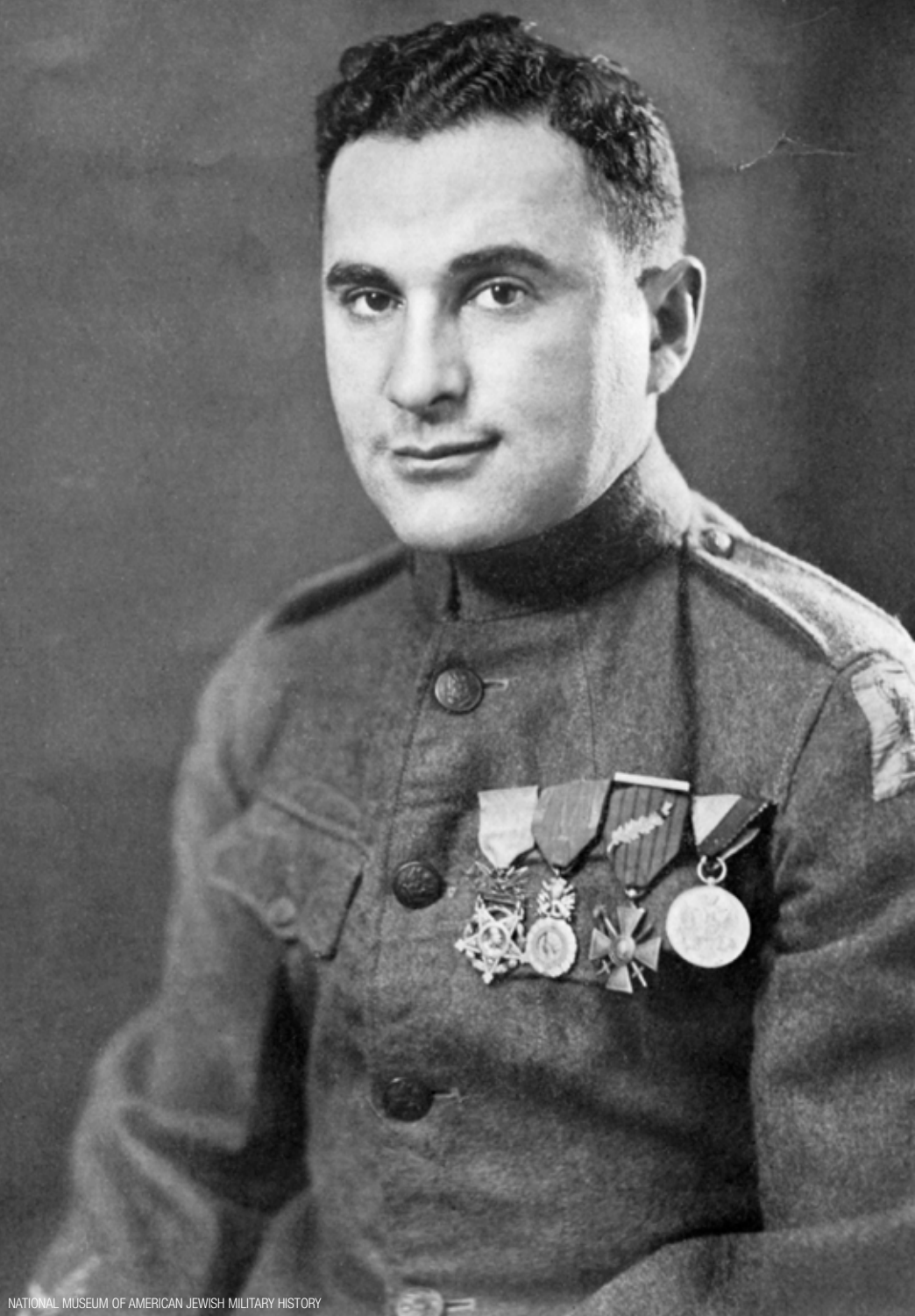
First Sergeant Kaufman took out a patrol for the purpose of attacking an enemy machine gun, which had checked the advance of his company. Before reaching the gun he became separated from his patrol and a machinegun bullet shattered his right arm. Without hesitation he advanced on the gun alone, throwing grenades with his left hand and charging with an empty pistol, taking one prisoner and scattering the crew, bringing the gun and prisoner back to the first-aid station.



ABOVE: Kaufman, leading Memorial Day parade with Major General Julius Klein and Governor Herbert Lehman of New York. (1942)

TOP: Benjamin Kaufman

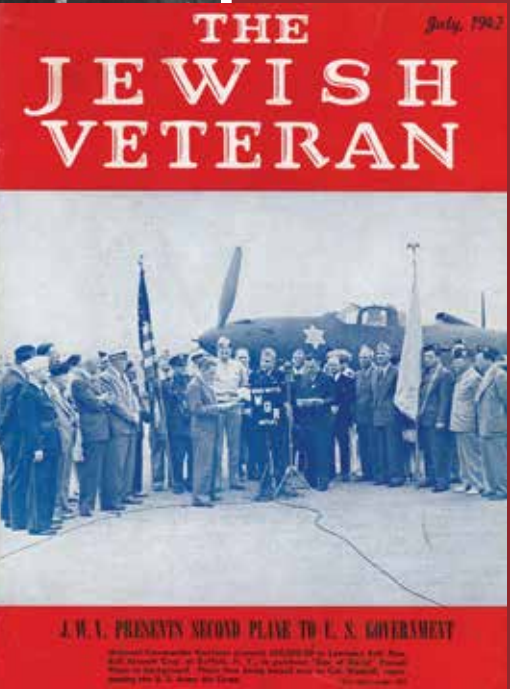
RIGHT: Kaufman, surrounded by past National Commanders, and past National President M. Freeman at Convention Banquet. (1941)



TOP: American Red Cross men ministering to the wounded in the Argonne Forest, France. (Oct. 11, 1918)

MIDDLE: Testimonial dinner honoring Kaufman, National Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States, Hotel Commodore. (Feb. 21, 1943)

RIGHT: Kaufman presents \$50,000 to Lawrence Bell, Pres. Bell Aircraft Corp., of Buffalo, NY, to purchase "Star of David" Pursuit Plane in background.



Benjamin Kaufman was born in Buffalo, but his family moved to Brooklyn when he was nine, where his Dad ran a livery stable. Kaufman was an athlete and excelled in football, baseball and basketball. By the time he reached high school he earned a reputation as a scrappy street fighter. A scholarship got him into Syracuse University, but World War I put his academic career on hold.

He enlisted in the Army in 1917, and was assigned to Company K, 308th Infantry, 77th Division. Kaufman's personality and ability allowed him to quickly rise to the rank of sergeant.

It was in the Argonne Forest of France on October 4, 1918 that Kaufman distinguished himself on the battlefield for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

After the war, Kaufman moved to Trenton, New Jersey where he eventually became director of the New Jersey Employment Service. During World War II he became executive director of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States in Washington, DC, serving from 1945 to 1959, and then returned to Trenton in his retirement.

WILLIAM SAWELSON

Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: August 5, 1895, Newark, NJ

DATE OF ACTION: October 26, 1918, Grand-Pre France

Killed in Action

BURIED: American Cemetery, Romagne, France



CITATION

Hearing a wounded man in a shell hole some distance away calling for water, Sgt. Sawelson, upon his own initiative, left shelter and crawled through heavy machinegun fire to where the man lay, giving him what water he had in his canteen. He then went back to his own shell hole, obtained more water, and was returning to the wounded man when he was killed by a machinegun bullet.

THIS PAGE

TOP: William Sawelson

BOTTOM: Sawelson's gravestone at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

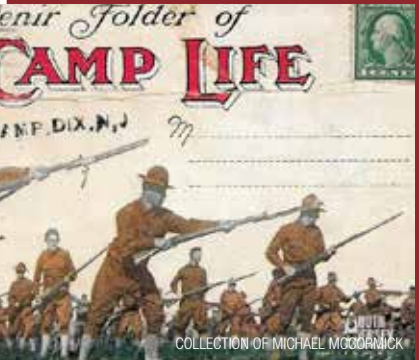
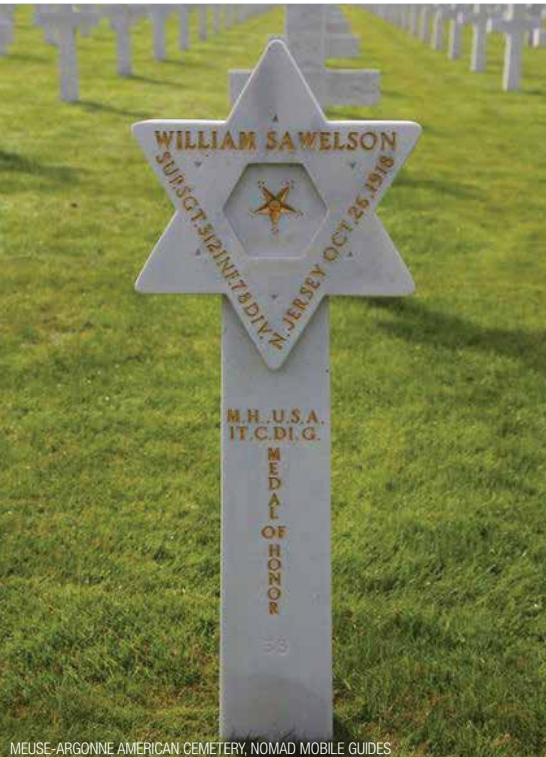
OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: While men of the 312th Infantry 78th Division were repairing a road blown up by the enemy at Brioules-sur-Bar, Ardennes, a buried shell exploded in their midst. (Nov. 4th, 1918)

MIDDLE: Governors Island, NY, where Jacob Sawelson, father of William Sawelson, accepted the Medal of Honor on behalf of his son.

BOTTOM: Soldiers at Camp Dix, where Sawelson trained.

FAR RIGHT: Souvenir Postcard of Camp Life at Camp Dix



WILLIAM SHEMIN

Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: October 14, 1899, Bayonne, NJ

DATE OF ACTION: August 7-10, 1918, Vesle River, France

DIED: August 15, 1973

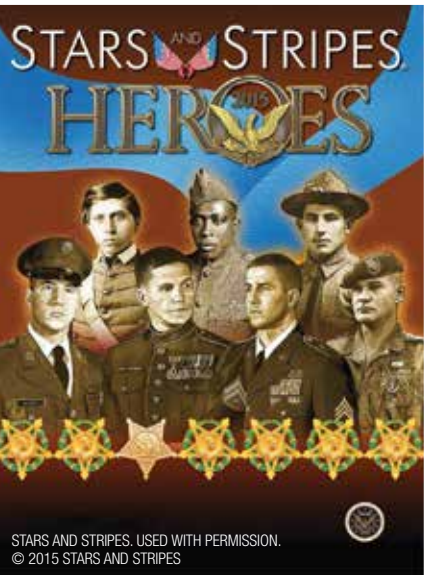
BURIED: Graniteville, Staten Island, NY



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY



U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. BERNARDO FULLER/RELEASED

CITATION

Sergeant Shemin distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a Rifleman with G Company, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, 4th Division, American Expeditionary Forces, in connection with combat operations against an armed enemy on the Vesle River, near Bazoches, France from August 7 to August 9, 1918. Sergeant Shemin left cover and crossed open space, repeatedly exposing himself to heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, to rescue the wounded. After Officers and Senior Noncommissioned Officers had become casualties, Sergeant Shemin took command of the platoon and displayed great initiative under fire until wounded on August 9. Sergeant Shemin’s extraordinary heroism and selflessness, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

THIS PAGE

TOP LEFT: William and Bertha Shemin on their wedding anniversary.

TOP: Rifleman William Shemin

RIGHT: Cover of the “Stars and Stripes Heroes,” a commemorative edition, 2015. (Shemin, upper row on right.)

FAR RIGHT: Shemin representing the 4th Infantry Division at the Meuse-Argonne monument in France.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: Four soldiers sitting in grass by pup tent in France. (Shemin second from left.)

MIDDLE: 47th Infantry Championship baseball team, American Expeditionary Forces, Vallendar, Germany. (Shemin, front row on left.)

BOTTOM: President Barack Obama bestows the Medal of Honor to William Shemin in the East Room of the White House. Accepting on his behalf are his daughters Elsie Shemin-Roth (middle) and Ina Shemin-Bass (left). (June 2, 2015)

William Shemin, the son of recent Jewish immigrants from Russia, was born in New York, New York in 1899, but the family moved shortly after his birth to the town of Bayonne, New Jersey. The athletic teenager played semi-pro baseball for the Bayonne Sea Lions at age 15, then later graduated from the New York State Ranger School and went to work as a forester in New York, New Jersey and the Adirondacks. Shemin enlisted in the Army on October 2, 1917, just before his 18th birthday, as a rifleman. (He lied and said his birth year was 1896.)

In 1918, he found himself near Bazoches, France, fighting one of the costliest battles of the war, the battle of the Vesle River during the Aisne-Marne Offensive. Three times during this battle, Shemin exposed himself to heavy gunfire in order to save his injured comrades. He was wounded in the head and found unconscious the next day. He received the Distinguished Service Cross in 1919 and was honorably discharged. He went on to get a degree in forestry from Syracuse University and started a greenhouse and nursery business in Bronx, New York. He raised three children, including daughter Elsie Shemin-Roth.

Shemin-Roth remembered her father’s best friend and war buddy, Jim Pritchard, who had said, “The only reason your dad was never awarded the Medal of Honor was because he was Jewish.”

In the early 2000’s, Shemin-Roth learned of a law that provided for the review of cases concerning Jews who may have been denied medals they earned in World War II. With no such law for World War I veterans, she gathered records and gained the help of a few congressman and senators, and the William Shemin Jewish World War I Veterans Act was introduced in 2011.

William Shemin was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in a June 2015 ceremony by President Obama, who said “Sergeant Shemin served at a time when the contributions of Jewish Americans in uniform were too often overlooked. It is my privilege on behalf of the American people to make this right and finally award the Medal of Honor to William Shemin.”

WORLD WAR II

September 1, 1939 – September 2, 1945

ISADORE SEIGFREID JACHMAN

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

BORN: December 14, 1922, Berlin, Germany

DATE OF ACTION: January 4, 1945, Flamierge, Belgium

Killed in Action

BURIED: Baltimore, MD

CITATION

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at Flamierge, Belgium, on January 4, 1945, when his company was pinned down by enemy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire; 2 hostile tanks attacked the unit, inflicting heavy casualties. S/Sgt. Jachman, seeing the desperate plight of his comrades, left his place of cover and with total disregard for his own safety dashed across open ground through a hail of fire and seizing a bazooka from a fallen comrade advanced on the tanks, which concentrated their fire on him. Firing the weapon alone, he damaged one and forced both to retire. S/Sgt. Jachman's heroic action, in which he suffered fatal wounds, disrupted the entire enemy attack.



GIFT OF JOSEPH JACHMAN, JEWISH MUSEUM OF MARYLAND



UNITED STATES ARMY SIGNAL CORPS - TFM COLLECTION



SC 415376, UNITED STATES ARMY SIGNAL CORPS

Isadore Jachman immigrated to the United States with his parents, Leo and Lotte Jachmann, from Berlin, Germany when he was two years old. The Jachman's, who Americanized their name by dropping the second “n” in their last name, settled in Baltimore, and had two more children, Joseph and Sylvia. Leo Jachman was a newspaper distributor for the Baltimore Sun and his son, known to his friends as “Izzy,” would help him. He taught his younger sister to jitterbug and would often take her to the movies, even occasionally when he had a date. He graduated high school from Baltimore City College in 1939.

The Jewish family lost many relatives during the Holocaust, including six aunts and uncles. Despite being German born, Izzy became a naturalized US citizen and volunteered to fight for his new country soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In 1942, he enlisted as a calisthenics instructor in the Army due to his gymnastic experience, but wanted to fight the Nazis. When he learned the only way to get out of his stateside job was to volunteer for the paratroopers, he immediately signed up and completed training with Company B of 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 17th Airborne Division. He was deployed to Europe and on January 4th, 1945, with nothing but a bazooka and his courage, stopped the counter-attack of two Nazi tanks at Flamierge, Belgium and saved his company from annihilation.

After the war, the village of Flamierge erected a statue where an “unknown” brave American soldier stood fighting to save the village. Army records established that this was Jachman, and his name was added to the statue. Jachman is buried in Adath Israel Congregation Cemetery in Dundalk, Maryland.

TOP: Isadore Jachman
RIGHT: Gravestone at Adahs Israel Congregation Cemetery, Dundalk, MD

FAR RIGHT: Mr. and Mrs. Leo Jachman with
Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Louis Barrish unveiling the memorial plaque
for Jachman Drill Field at Fort Meade, MD. (June 13, 1965)



U. DONALD MORSE



CENTRAL PHOTO FACILITY, FORT MEADE, MD, JEWISH MUSEUM OF MARYLAND



TOP: Flamierge after the Battle,
likely in the spring of 1945.
MIDDLE: Soldiers from the
US 101st Airborne Division watching
aircraft deliver supplies to their unit in
Bastogne, Belgium. (Dec. 26, 1944)
BOTTOM: The Medal of Honor Certificate for
Staff Sergeant Isadore Jachman.

BEN LOUIS SALOMON

Captain, U.S. Army

BORN: September 1, 1914, Milwaukee, WI

DATE OF ACTION: July 7, 1945, Village of Tanapag, Saipan

Killed in Action

BURIED: Glendale, CA

THIS PAGE

TOP: Ben Louis Salomon

MIDDLE: Army Secretary Thomas White, Dr. Robert West, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki and Sgt. Maj. of the Army Jack Tilley pause following the unveiling of Salomon's photo and Medal of Honor citation during his induction into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. (May 2, 2002)

BOTTOM: Soldiers of the 2nd Regiment, 2nd Division, US Marine Corps after 20 days of combat in Saipan.



SOURCE UNKNOWN



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CITATION

Captain Ben L. Salomon was serving at Saipan, in the Marianas Islands on July 7, 1944, as the Surgeon for the 2nd Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division. The Regiment's 1st and 2nd Battalions were attacked by an overwhelming force estimated between 3,000 and 5,000 Japanese soldiers. In the first minutes of the attack, approximately 30 wounded soldiers came into Captain Salomon's aid station. As the perimeter began to be overrun, it became increasingly difficult for Captain Salomon to work on the wounded. He then saw a Japanese soldier bayoneting one of the wounded soldiers lying near the tent. Firing from a squatting position, Captain Salomon quickly killed the enemy soldier. Then, two more Japanese soldiers appeared in the front entrance of the tent. As they were killed, four more crawled under the tent walls. Rushing them, Captain Salomon kicked the knife out of the hand of one, shot another, bayoneted a third, and butted the fourth enemy soldier in the stomach. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Captain Salomon attempted to hold off the enemy until the wounded were clear. He rushed out of the tent and took control of a machine gun. When his body was later found, 98 dead enemy soldiers were piled in front of his position. Captain Salomon's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



DEFENSE GOV PHOTO BY JIM GARAMONE



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS FREDERICK B. FINDTNER COLLECTION



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS FREDERICK B. FINDTNER COLLECTION

Ben Salomon was born an only child in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was an Eagle Scout who graduated from Shorewood High School. He finished his undergraduate studies at the University of Southern California and graduated from the USC Dental College in 1937, at a time when a limited number of Jewish students were allowed to attend. Before beginning his dental practice, he tried to enlist in both the American and Canadian armed forces but was unsuccessful. Instead, the tall, attractive Salomon set up his own dental practice in Beverly Hills, and counted aspiring movie stars among some of his patients.

But in 1940, he was drafted into a peacetime army as an infantryman, and became an expert rifle and marksman, rising to the rank of sergeant in charge of a machine-gun section. With America at war in 1942, though, and in need of more dentists, Salomon transferred to the Dental Corps.

July of 1944 was when his talents of dentist and soldier converged, during a fierce battle on the island of Saipan. His battalion's surgeon was badly wounded so Salomon volunteered to take his place, trying to keep up with the large number of wounded. Enemy soldiers soon overran the aid station tent, and Salomon used hand-to-hand combat to kill several of them. Then, in trying to provide cover and protect his men, he used machine-gun fire and killed 98 enemy soldiers before he lost his own life. Salomon's body was found with 24 wounds on it.

President George W. Bush awarded Salomon the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously in 2002. Dr. Robert West, a USC alumnus, accepted on his behalf, as Salomon had no surviving family or relatives to attend the ceremony.

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: A typical Marine aid station on Saipan.

MIDDLE: Saipan Cliffs, Saipan, Mariana Islands (Jun-Jul 1944)

BOTTOM: Saipan, Mariana Islands (Jun-Jul 1944)

RAYMOND ZUSSMAN

Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army

BORN: July 23, 1917, Hamtramck, MI

DATE OF ACTION: September 12, 1944, Noroy le Bourg, France

DIED: September 21, 1944

BURIED: Ferndale, MI

CITATION

On 12 September 1944, 2nd Lt. Zussman was in command of 2 tanks operating with an infantry company in the attack on enemy forces occupying the town of Noroy le Bourg, France. At 7 p.m., his command tank bogged down. Throughout the ensuing action, armed only with a carbine, he reconnoitered alone on foot far in advance of his remaining tank and the infantry. Returning only from time to time to designate targets, he directed the action of the tank and turned over to the infantry the numerous German soldiers he had caused to surrender. He located a roadblock and directed his tanks to destroy it. Fully exposed to fire from enemy positions only 50 yards distant, he stood by his tank directing its fire. Three Germans were killed and 8 surrendered. Again he walked before his tank, leading it against an enemy-held group of houses, machinegun and small arms fire kicking up dust at his feet. The tank fire broke the resistance and 20 enemy surrendered. Going forward again alone he passed an enemy-occupied house from which Germans fired on him and threw grenades in his path. After a brief firefight, he signaled his tank to come up and fire on the house. Eleven German soldiers were killed and 15 surrendered. Going on alone, he disappeared around a street corner. The fire of his carbine could be heard and in a few minutes he reappeared driving 30 prisoners before him. Under 2nd Lt. Zussman's heroic and inspiring leadership, 18 enemy soldiers were killed and 92 captured.

TOP: Zussman behind wheel of Army vehicle. (circa 1942)

BOTTOM: A poster with a picture of Zussman, encouraging people to buy war bonds. (Dec. 1, 1944)



TOP: 9th Regiment Soldiers fighting to secure the port city of Brest, France. (September 1944)

ABOVE: The Army ship re-named for Lt. Raymond Zussman in honor of his service.

RIGHT: "Fighting For America," a cartoon vignette series of Jewish servicemen who won awards, by artist Leon Blehart for the Jewish Welfare Board. (May-October 1945)

Raymond Zussman was the youngest of eight children and the son of Nathan and Rebecca Leah, who was born in Lithuania. The two married before they came to the United States at the turn of the century to escape religious oppression and prejudice. They settled in Hamtramck, Michigan where Raymond was born, and his father operated a shoe store there.

As pious orthodox Jews, they sent all of their children to Hebrew school. Raymond became a bar mitzvah at Mishkan Israel Congregation and sang in the choir there. A small but husky boy, standing only 5 foot 4 inches tall and weighing 140 pounds, the good natured and bright Zussman played basketball, tennis and track at Central High School in Detroit, where the family moved when Raymond was eight years old. He attended classes at Wayne University and the Detroit Institute of Technology before entering the army in September of 1941 at the age of 23. After fighting in the allied invasion of North Africa and being wounded at battle in Italy, he rejected a headquarters position in favor of another front line position. He died at the age of twenty-six from a German mortar explosion, nine days after the action in battle that won him the Medal of Honor. His casket lay in state for three hours at a synagogue, rather than at City Hall.

KOREAN WAR

June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953

LEONARD M. KRAVITZ

Private First Class, U.S. Army

BORN: August 8, 1931, Brooklyn, NY

DATE OF ACTION: March 6-7, 1951, Yangpyong, Korea

Killed in Action

BURIED: Mt Carmel Cemetery, Glendale, NY

CITATION

Private First Class Leonard M. Kravitz distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an assistant machinegunner with Company M, 5th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy in Yangpyong, Korea on March 6 and 7, 1951. After friendly elements had repulsed two probing attacks, the enemy launched a fanatical banzai charge with heavy supporting fire and, despite staggering losses, pressed the assault with ruthless determination. When the machinegunner was wounded in the initial phase of the action, Private First Class Kravitz immediately seized the weapon and poured devastating fire into the ranks of the onrushing assailants. The enemy effected and exploited a breach on the left flank, rendering the friendly positions untenable. Upon the order to withdraw, Private First Class Kravitz voluntarily remained to provide protective fire for the retiring elements. Detecting enemy troops moving toward friendly positions, Private First Class Kravitz swept the hostile soldiers with deadly, accurate fire, killing the entire group. His destructive retaliation caused the enemy to concentrate vicious fire on his position and enabled the friendly elements to withdraw. Later, after friendly troops had returned, Private First Class Kravitz was found dead behind the gun he had so heroically manned, surrounded by numerous enemy dead.



Leonard Kravitz grew up in the largely Jewish neighborhood of Crown Heights in Brooklyn, New York. He hung out with a close-knit group of friends every day before school at Rae’s Candy Store, where they would keep up with neighborhood news while reading notes posted in the front window.

Leonard’s brother Seymour was a green beret, and Leonard followed suit, enlisting in the Army two years after high school with one of those friends, Mitchel Libman, during the Korean War. Libman survived but Kravitz was killed in action at the age of 20. Back home, it was at Rae’s where Libman learned that Kravitz had been awarded the army’s second-highest honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, for saving an entire platoon. The news set Libman off on a lifelong mission to right what he felt was wrong.

Libman looked through all of the Medal of Honor Citations and realized that several were identical to what Kravitz had done, yet he had not been given the same award, likely because he was Jewish. With the help of Congressman Robert Wexler of Florida, The Leonard Kravitz Jewish War Veterans Act of 2001 was introduced, which would allow many Jewish war veterans, living or dead, as well as Hispanic American veterans, to receive their proper due.

In the largest ceremony of service members to be honored since World War II, 24 veterans, including Kravitz and other Jewish, Hispanic and African American veterans, were awarded the Medal of Honor on March 18th, 2014 by President Barack Obama.

Leonard Kravitz is the namesake and Uncle of famed singer-songwriter Lenny Kravitz. “It’s a wonderful thing to be here today to be a part of this and to see him get his honor,” said the actor and Grammy-winning Kravitz. “I’m very proud to be named after him and carry his name forward. He’s a part of me.”

TIBOR “TED” RUBIN

Corporal, U.S. Army

BORN: June 18, 1929, Nograd, Hungary

DATE OF ACTION: July 23, 1950–April 20, 1953, Republic of Korea

DIED: December 5, 2015

BURIED: Garden Grove, CA

THIS PAGE

TOP: Private Tibor Rubin, Korea. (1951)

MIDDLE: The Rubin Family. Front row, left to right: Ilonka, Rosa, Ferenc, Tibor
Back row: Irene, Edith, Emery (circa 1939)

BOTTOM: Rubin and his bride Yvonne at their wedding.



CITATION

Corporal Tibor Rubin distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism during the period July 23, 1950, to April 20, 1953, while serving as a rifleman with Company I, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division in the Republic of Korea. While his unit was retreating to the Pusan Perimeter, Corporal Rubin was assigned to stay behind to keep open the vital Taegu-Pusan Road link used by his withdrawing unit. During the ensuing battle, overwhelming numbers of North Korean troops assaulted a hill defended solely by Corporal Rubin. He inflicted a staggering number of casualties on the attacking force during his personal 24-hour battle, single-handedly slowing the enemy advance and allowing the 8th Cavalry Regiment to complete its withdrawal successfully. As the battle raged, Corporal Rubin was severely wounded and captured by the Chinese. Choosing to remain in the prison camp despite offers from the Chinese to return him to his native Hungary, Corporal Rubin disregarded his own personal safety and immediately began sneaking out of the camp at night in search of food for his comrades. Corporal Rubin provided not only food to the starving Soldiers, but also desperately needed medical care and moral support for the sick and wounded in the POW camp. His brave, selfless efforts were directly attributed to saving the lives of as many as forty of his fellow prisoners. Corporal Rubin’s gallant actions in close contact with the enemy and unyielding courage and bravery while a prisoner of war are in the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army. [Note: Citation slightly edited for length].

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: The 72nd Tank Battalion and other Division soldiers crossing the Nakdong River in South Korea. (August 1950)

MIDDLE TOP: Private Rubin talking to reporters at Freedom Village after his release from a Chinese POW camp.

MIDDLE BOTTOM: The only known surviving photograph of Prison Camp No. 5 in Pyoktong, North Korea.

BOTTOM: Rubin wears the Medal of Honor presented to him by George W. Bush during ceremonies at the White House. (Sept. 23, 2005)



VIETNAM WAR

November 1, 1955 – April 30, 1975

JACK JACOBS

Captain, U.S. Army

BORN: August 2, 1945, Brooklyn, NY

DATE OF ACTION: March 9, 1968, Kien Phong Province, Vietnam

RETIRED: Colonel, U.S. Army

CITATION

Capt. Jacobs (then 1st Lt.), Infantry, distinguished himself while serving as assistant battalion advisor, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. The 2nd Battalion was advancing to contact when it came under intense heavy machine gun and mortar fire from a Viet Cong battalion positioned in well-fortified bunkers. As the 2nd Battalion deployed into attack formation its advance was halted by devastating fire. Capt. Jacobs, with the command element of the lead company, called for and directed air strikes on the enemy positions to facilitate a renewed attack. Due to the intensity of the enemy fire and heavy casualties to the command group, including the company commander, the attack stopped and the friendly troops became disorganized. Although wounded by mortar fragments, Capt. Jacobs assumed command of the allied company, ordered a withdrawal from the exposed position and established a defensive perimeter. Despite profuse bleeding from head wounds which impaired his vision, Capt. Jacobs, with complete disregard for his safety, returned under intense fire to evacuate a seriously wounded advisor to the safety of a wooded area where he administered lifesaving first aid. He then returned through heavy automatic weapons fire to evacuate the wounded company commander. Capt. Jacobs made repeated trips across the fire-swept open rice paddies evacuating wounded and their weapons. On 3 separate occasions, Capt. Jacobs contacted and drove off Viet Cong squads who were searching for allied wounded and weapons, single-handedly killing 3 and wounding several others. His gallant actions and extraordinary heroism saved the lives of 1 U.S. advisor and 13 allied soldiers. Through his effort the allied company was restored to an effective fighting unit and prevented defeat of the friendly forces by a strong and determined enemy.



TOP: Jack Jacobs

MIDDLE: Jacobs receiving the Medal of Honor from President Richard Nixon. (Oct. 9, 1969)

BOTTOM: Jacobs in Vietnam

TOP: Jacobs in Vietnam

MIDDLE: Jacobs speaks at a Vietnam Veterans appreciation event hosted by the NFL's New York Jets. (Dec. 4, 2016)

BOTTOM: Medal of Honor recipient Jack H. Jacobs spends time with Cadets from the U.S. Military Academy during the 113th Army vs. Navy football game. Dec. 8, 2012, in Philadelphia.

Jack Jacobs was born in Brooklyn, New York to a Jewish family of Polish, Greek and Romanian descent. He moved as child with his family to New Jersey, where he later attended Rutgers University and was a member of their ROTC program. Upon graduation in 1966 with a bachelor’s degree, a wife, daughter and no job, Jacobs entered the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant. He volunteered immediately to be a paratrooper, learning that they received extra pay for their hazardous work. His plan was to complete his three-year commitment and then return home and go to law school.

In 1967, he landed in Vietnam as a first Lieutenant, with the role of assistant adviser to a Vietnamese infantry battalion in the Mekong Delta. On March 9, 1968, the 5”3” 115-pound soldier was walking through a rice paddy when he felt a big rush of hot air. He was lifted up off the ground and then landed on his hands and knees, blood pouring out of him. “I was convinced I was going to die,” he said, but then realized, “...if somebody doesn’t do something, then we would all surely die.” The words of the great Jewish philosopher Hillel came to his mind immediately, “If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” He assumed control of the unit, and saved the lives of a U.S. adviser and 13 allied soldiers. Days later, Jacobs endured more than a dozen surgeries to repair his skull and face, but never regained his sense of smell or taste.

After completing his masters in International Relations from Rutgers, he returned to Vietnam in July of 1972 with the Army, where he was wounded again. “I thought that everyone who’s lucky enough to live in this free country should join the service. I thought the mission was important, but I love the people,” he said. “They know and understand what service and sacrifice is all about, and it makes me feel much better to be around people who have worn the uniform.”

In 1987, Jacobs retired as a colonel from the Army and became an international banker, eventually becoming Managing Director of Bankers Trust and Lehman Brothers. He was a faculty member at the United States Military Academy in West Point, teaching international relations and comparative politics for three years, from 1973 to 1976, and at the National War College in Washington, D.C. He has authored or co-authored several books on military subjects.

Jacobs retired in 1996 and lives in New Jersey. He is a director of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation and a military analyst for NBC/MSNBC.

JOHN LEE LEVITOW

Airman First Class, U.S. Air Force

BORN: November 1, 1945, Hartford, CT
DATE OF ACTION: February 24, 1969 over Long Binh, Vietnam
DIED: November 8, 2000
BURIED: Arlington National Cemetery, VA

THIS PAGE

TOP: John Lee Levitow

BOTTOM: Levitow aboard the AC-47 “Spooky” before it was hit.

CITATION

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. Levitow (then Airman First Class), U.S. Air Force, distinguished himself by exceptional heroism while assigned as a loadmaster aboard an AC-47 aircraft flying a night mission in support of Long Binh Army post. Sgt. Levitow’s aircraft was struck by a hostile mortar round. All occupants of the cargo compartment were wounded and helplessly slammed against the floor and fuselage. The explosion tore an activated flare from the grasp of a crewmember. Sgt. Levitow, though stunned by the concussion of the blast and suffering from over 40 fragment wounds in the back and legs, staggered to his feet and turned to assist the man who had been knocked down and was bleeding heavily. As he was moving his wounded comrade forward and away from the opened cargo compartment door, he saw the smoking flare ahead of him in the aisle. Realizing the danger involved and completely disregarding his own wounds, Sgt. Levitow started toward the burning flare. The aircraft was partially out of control and the flare was rolling wildly from side to side. Unable to grasp the rolling flare with his hands, he threw himself bodily upon the burning flare. Hugging the deadly device to his body, he dragged himself back to the rear of the aircraft and hurled the flare through the open cargo door. At that instant the flare separated and ignited in the air, but clear of the aircraft. Sgt. Levitow, by his selfless and heroic actions, saved the aircraft and its entire crew from certain death and destruction. [Note: Citation edited slightly in length]



OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: John Levitow Jr., center, with his cousin, Tara Bufis and her husband, James, pose with Levitow Award winners in front of the “Spirit of Sgt. John Levitow,” New York Air National Guard Globemaster III, Lakehurst, NJ. (Aug. 24, 2017)
MIDDLE: The AC-47 “Spooky” the morning after being hit.
BOTTOM LEFT: President Nixon bestows the Medal of Honor to now-Sergeant Levitow at the White House. (May 14, 1970)
BOTTOM RIGHT: Levitow speaks to an Airman Leadership School class at Fairchild Air Force Base, WA. (1996)

Born in Hartford, Connecticut to a Jewish father and a Christian mother, **John Levitow** grew up in Glastonbury and graduated from Glastonbury High School. He had originally decided to join the Navy after graduating high school because the Army and Marines required too much walking, but when he had to wait too long for recruiters, he went next door and enlisted with the Air Force in 1966.

He was sent to Vietnam, where he was trained as a loadmaster for C-130s. On February 24, 1969, during a night mission, a mortar shell hit the AC-47 plane he was on and wounded everyone on the plane. Levitow, who sustained nearly forty wounds from the blast, managed to throw the smoking flare out of their crashing plane just before it exploded, saving the aircraft and its crew. He recovered from his wounds after a brief stay in the hospital and went on to fly 20 more missions in Vietnam. On May 14, 1970, presented by President Richard Nixon, Levitow became the lowest-ranking airman ever to receive the Medal of Honor.

After being discharged in 1974, Levitow returned to Connecticut and devoted his professional life to Air Force enlistees and veterans, working as a VA Congressional liaison, benefits counselor and chief of medical administration at the Newington VA Medical Center. He joined the Jewish War Veterans Post 45 and self-identified as Jewish. He died from cancer at the age of 55 at his home in Rocky Hill and was buried with military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

September 11, 2001 – Current

CHRISTOPHER A. CELIZ

Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army

BORN: January 12, 1986, Summerville, South Carolina

DATE OF ACTION: July 12, 2018 Paktia Province, Afghanistan

DIED: July 12, 2018

FUNERAL: July 18, 2018, at Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah, Georgia, conducted by Rabbi Robert W. Haas

ABBREVIATED CITATION

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher A. Celiz distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while engaging with the enemy in Paktia Province, Afghanistan, on July 12, 2018.

As the leader of a special operations unit comprised of partnered forces and members of the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Celiz led an operation to clear an area of enemy forces and thereby disrupt future attacks against the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Shortly after his team reached their initial objective, a large enemy force attacked. The enemy placed effective fire on him and his team. Realizing the danger to his team and the operation, Celiz voluntarily exposed himself to intense enemy machine-gun and small-arms fire, thereby allowing U.S. and partnered forces to maneuver to a secure location and begin treating a critically wounded partnered force member.

As the medical evacuation helicopter arrived, it was immediately engaged by sustained enemy fire. Knowing how critical it was to quickly load the wounded partner, Celiz willingly exposed himself again to heavy enemy fire so he could take charge to direct and lead the evacuation. After the wounded partner was loaded, Celiz’s team returned to cover, but he remained with the aircraft, returning a high volume of fire.

Upon the helicopter’s liftoff, Celiz was hit by enemy fire. Fully aware of his injury, but understanding the peril to the aircraft, Celiz motioned to the pilots to depart rather than remain to load him. His selfless actions saved the life of the evacuated partnered force member and prevented further casualties among other members of his team and the aircrew. Celiz died as a result of his injuries.



TOP: Official Army portrait of Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Celiz, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.
BOTTOM: Celiz during his sophomore year at The Citadel.

TOP: Celiz holding the Torah during Simchat Torah at Congregation Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia. (September 2010)
MIDDLE: Family photo taken in honor of the couple’s 10th wedding anniversary. (October 2017)
BOTTOM: Katherine Celiz and daughter Shannon stand as the citation is read before receiving the Medal of Honor from President Joseph R. Biden Jr. during a ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. (Dec. 16, 2021)

Christopher Andrew Celiz was born in Summerville, South Carolina, on January 12, 1986. Growing up he made friends easily with people from diverse backgrounds. He was known for being exceptionally kind, funny, and smart. His hobbies included painting, playing guitar and riding motorcycles — but his future wife, Katherine (“Kt”), whom he met at Summerville High and married in 2007 — says the military was Chris’s life’s calling.

Celiz participated in JROTC in high school and after graduation in 2004, attended the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina. In September 2006, he enlisted in the United States Army where he was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

In 2010, Celiz had come back from a recent deployment to Iraq, where he had become close to a Muslim interpreter. He and his wife were at church on Easter Sunday when a pastor’s sharp words denouncing specific groups of people greatly upset him. The incident led him to research other religions that were more inclusive and accepting. The couple found comfort in the Jewish religion’s values and acceptance of others. They attended services at Congregation Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia and led a Jewish lifestyle for several years before finally converting in June of 2016. During his conversion, Chris stated, “I am prepared to not hide my Jewish identity, regardless of the situation or location I find myself. Having spent several years in the Middle East in a variety of locations, I realize better than most the challenges this can present.”

Celiz deployed to Afghanistan six times, between 2011 and 2018. His skill, selflessness and determination led to his selection in 2013 to join the 75th Ranger Regiment, an elite Army Special Operations force.

In 2017, Celiz earned the rank of Sergeant First Class. On July 12, 2018, during his fifth deployment as a Ranger in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, Celiz was killed while leading a mission in Paktia Province, shielding his team and ensuring a medical helicopter could land and evacuate the wounded.

Celiz died of his wounds at the age of 32. Celiz is survived by his wife Katherine and their daughter Shannon, who was 8 years old at the time he was killed in action.

At the Medal of Honor presentation ceremony at the White House on December 16, 2021, President Joe Biden said, “His legacy lives on in the lives he saved, the teammates he mentored, and the memories he made with his beloved wife, Katie, and especially... their precious daughter, Shannon.”

