

The Tablets

The Official Newsletter of The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund • Spring 2024



**JEWISH CADETS FROM THE SERVICE ACADEMIES
TOUR THE US CAPITOL DURING JEWISH
WARRIOR WEEKEND.**

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West Point Jewish Chapel Fund

PO Box 84
West Point, NY 10996
Phone: (845) 446-7706
wpjcf@outlook.com
westpointjewishchapel.com

Fund News

L'dor va-dor—from generation to generation. That was my thought when our president, Terry Bresnick '69, and I had the honor of having brunch with the oldest living West Point graduate, Col. (Ret.) Herbert I. Stern, USMA class of 1941, last month. In all the West Point publicity surrounding Col. Stern's ascension to the role of oldest living grad, nary a mention is made of the fact that he is also the oldest living Jewish grad.



MG (USA Ret.)
Jeffrey A. Jacobs

Col. Stern, 105 years young, entered West Point in 1937, against the advice of his father, who had been warned of an antisemitic environment at USMA. Chapel attendance was mandatory for Cadet Stern (as it was for all cadets until 1972), but for his first two years, there were no Jewish services for him and his seven Jewish classmates to attend. He was forced to choose between attending Protestant or Catholic services each Sunday. In 1939, the Superintendent authorized the formation of a Jewish chapel squad, and Col. Stern was among the first group of Jewish cadets to attend Jewish services at West Point (you guessed it—on Sunday mornings); those services were conducted by a visiting civilian rabbi who had been an Army chaplain in World War I. Although Col. Stern recalled only one instance of overt antisemitism at West Point, he recounted that subtle antisemitism was ever-present, and that no Jewish cadet during his four years was advanced beyond the rank of cadet sergeant (the lowest rank for firsties, or seniors, in those days).

By 1944, a little more than three years after his graduation, Col. Stern was a major commanding a field artillery battalion during the Battle of the Bulge. He received the Silver Star for his actions under fire during that battle, and he is honored for his heroism on our wall of honor in the Jewish chapel. In 1945, his battalion was part of the force that liberated the Salzwedel concentration camp, a slave labor camp housing thousands of Jewish women, in northern Germany. To this day, Col. Stern's most vivid memory of that experience is the smell. After Germany surrendered, Col. Stern—with fewer than five years of Army service—became the military governor of several German municipalities.

Col. Stern retired in 1968, after serving in Vietnam (then called Indochina) in 1950 and in several senior positions, including working directly for President Dwight D. Eisenhower (USMA class of 1915). Col. Stern doesn't doubt that lingering antisemitism in the Army of the late 1950s and early 1960s played a role in his nonselection for promotion to general officer.

We Jewish grads who followed Col. Stern stand on his shoulders—*l'dor va-dor*. But Col. Stern's Jewish West Point experience also illustrates how far the West Point Jewish community has come since then, and how important the chapel and the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund have been to that evolution.

Terry and I also attended Jewish Warrior Weekend activities at the Naval Academy the same weekend we met with Col. Stern. JWW is one of the many programs that the Fund makes possible for our Jewish cadets. Around fifty cadets and midshipmen from West Point, the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy, and the Jewish chaplains from the three academies, got together for a weekend of Jewish military fellowship as well as some mentorship on being a Jewish leader in today's military. (The Naval Academy Jewish chapel is a beautiful facility that, like our own chapel, was envisioned by Jewish USNA alumni, built with the private money they raised, and donated to the Navy some 21 years after our own chapel was dedicated.) I don't believe I've ever seen as many Jews in uniform singing the *kiddush* together after a Friday evening *Shabbat* service—and not all of the Jewish cadets from West Point and Air Force made the trip. What a far cry from 1937, when there was no Jewish chapel at West Point and the eight Jewish cadets of the class of 1941 were not only denied the opportunity to worship as Jews but were forced to attend Christian services.

Just as we Jewish graduates stand on Col. Herb Stern's shoulders, so will future Jewish grads stand on ours—and by "ours," I mean the shoulders not only of Jewish grads, but of all those who support the West Point Jewish Chapel and the West Point Jewish community. From my perch (and I'm still involved with the Army Jewish community), the religious pendulum is in danger of swinging back toward a place where Christianity could become, almost imperceptibly, the Army's favored religion. We won't see the same kind of antisemitism that Col. Stern saw; the danger is the subtle but unmistakable exclusion of Jews (and others) because we are not Christians (for example, public Christian prayer by Army chaplains has become pervasive and is increasingly condoned). The West Point Jewish Chapel and its programs made possible by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, like Jewish Warrior Weekend, stand as a reminder to the Army and the nation that we Jews have served in the Army since 1775 and have been a fixture at West Point since 1802. We will continue to stand on the shoulders of those who came before us and to build on the legacy they have given us. To quote Col. Stern: "I am proud of the Jewish chapel at West Point." *L'dor va-dor*.

Go Army!
Jeff Jacobs, USMA '79

Chapel News

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of the West Point Academic year and that I have been here almost a year. In the last edition of the Tablets, I spoke about how fast time goes and the importance of appreciating and cherishing the moments along way.



Rabbi Heather Borshof

That being said, I want to share what a remarkable time I have had during my first year as the West Point Jewish Chaplain. Every new experience is not without its challenges and bumps along the way, but as I traveled this uncharted road, I had support from so many people. One of the things I learned early on in my military career is that in order to be good leaders, we need to understand how many others have an impact on our success. In the military, those who are true leaders realize that we depend on others as much as others depend on us.

I have experienced this here at West Point as well. In addition to the scores of people who have helped me succeed overall, I have seen it most within our own Jewish community; a community that has come together both during the celebrations of the year, and also during the difficult times. This year has been an especially challenging time for our people, but that has only strengthened us as we have supported one another. We have incredible lay leadership in our community and it has been most gratifying to see how our Jewish Cadets have stepped into that role as well. During my time in the Army, I have always encouraged members of the community to participate in any way they would like, to include helping lead the services. Apparently, I was successful at that when one of our Cadets asked me if she could lead the entire service one Shabbat evening. I said, "of course," and when I asked her if she wanted me up there with her, she said, "No, that's okay, you can sit in the pews and relax." We have had many others share in leading services throughout the year, as well as some who led the entire service. I thought how wonderful that is, and then I wondered whether I was helping myself out of a job! But in all seriousness, I am proud that we have passionate and competent leaders in our West Point Jewish community who will ensure that Judaism survives and thrives in the military wherever they serve as lay leaders; especially in places that would otherwise have nobody to lead the other Jewish Soldiers.

I want to wish the graduating Jewish Cadets much *mazel* (good fortune) and all the best in their upcoming assignments. I know they will make the Jewish community proud.

As I began my year at West Point with the blessing asking God to remind us that time is precious, I want to close the year with the same blessing for our upcoming new Second Lieutenants as they embark on new endeavors, as well as for all of us as we continue our journey together.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam shebechchayahnu vekiyamanu vehegianu lazman ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this sacred moment.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Heather Borshof

West Point Jewish Chapel Fund Mission

The West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, in support of the USMA mission to produce leaders of character, maintains an endowment to support Jewish cadets and programs, contributes to the beauty of the Chapel for the benefit of cadets and the public, and supports and engages with the Army Jewish community.

West Point Jewish Chapel

A Historic Edifice and Center for Jewish Life at West Point

Est. 1984

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Superintendent
LTG Steven W. Gilland,
USMA '90

Garrison Commander
COL Brian A. Jacobs,
USMA '99

CHAPLAIN CHAIN OF SUPPORT

USMA Chaplain
CH (COL) Keith Goode

Garrison Chaplain
Chaplain (LTC) Karyl
Maschoff

JEWISH CHAPEL DIRECTORY

UNIT MINISTRY TEAM

Jewish Chaplain
CH (MAJ) Heather
Borshof

Chapel NCOIC
SPC Andrew Johnson

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Hillel OIC
COL Benjamin M.
Wallen, USMA '96

Choir OIC
Mrs. Elaine McConnell

Ass't Hillel OIC
Mrs. Elaine McConnell

CADET LEADERSHIP

Hillel CIC
CDT Brandon Agran,
USMA '24

Ass't Hillel CIC
CDT Rachel Radvinsky,
USMA '24

CDT Benjamin Dubetsky,
USMA '24

CDT Olivia Raykhman,
USMA '25

Choir CIC
CDT Sophie Cohen,
USMA '24

Ass't Choir CIC
CDT Blake Schryer,
USMA '25

CDT Celeste Pollack-
Lamirand, USMA '24

JEWISH WAR VETERANS

USMA Liaison
Ed Goldwasser

Ass't USMA Liaison
COL Joshua Lubarsky,
USMA '96

West Point Jewish Chapel
750 Merritt Road
West Point, NY 10996
Phone: (845) 938-2710

Shabbat Services:
Friday 1900

Sat, Sun and Holidays:
Please call for hours

Visiting Hours:
Mon-Fri 0900-1600



The community lights votive candles .

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL OCTOBER 7TH VIGIL

On 28 November 2023, Cadet leadership of the West Point Hillel hosted a candle vigil in honor of those killed in Israel by the Hamas attacks on 7 October. Over 25 Cadets and community members attended the vigil which began with opening remarks by COL Ben Wallen (West Point Jewish Lay Leader). Cadet Ben Dubetsky (Hillel, Co-Cadet-in-Charge) served as the master of ceremonies. Cadet Brandon Agran (Hillel, Co-Cadet-in-Charge) provided his thoughts and introduced CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof (West Point Jewish Chaplain) who talked about lighting candles to represent all those who were murdered on the 7 October attacks followed by saying the mourner’s kaddish. The community took time lighting the candles that lined tables throughout the length of the chapel with papers on the tables providing the names of the victims of the 7 October attacks. Both Chaplain Matthew Pawlikowski “Father Matt” (United States Corps of Cadets [USCC] Chaplain) and Chaplain Keith Goode (United States Military Academy [USMA] Chaplain) beautifully addressed the community and shared their support against antisemitism and any form of hate speech or acts. The Jewish Choir, led by Cadets Celeste Pollack-Lamirand and Sophie Cohen, sang the Mi Shebeira as a prayer for healing dedicated to the 240 hostages held in Gaza. The Jewish Choir continued with singing Shalom Rav as a means to provide a prayer for the collective good of all people, for all time. The final song to close out the evening was Am Yisrael Chai to signify that despite the challenges we face, the Jewish people live on. Despite the solemnity of the occasion, it was intended to be celebratory to show that there are still good things in our lives.



CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof speaks to the cadets.



Father Matt shares his thoughts with the cadets.



Cadets light candles in remembrance.

RELIGIOUS CLUB - HILLEL

KOSHER TROOPS CARE PACKAGE PACKING



COL Ben Wallen, Mrs. Elaine McConnell, CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof, Dr. Yasmine & son (Matan) Kalksein and West Point Cadets join with Kosher Troops Leader (Sara Fuerst) enjoying the end of a successful packing operation!

On 25 February 2024, six Cadets along with COL Ben Wallen (OIC of Hillel), Mrs. Elaine McConnell (OIC of Jewish Choir), and CH Heather Borshof (West Point Jewish Chaplain) traveled to the Kosher Troops charity organization in Airmont, NY to help pack care packages for deployed Soldiers. Upon arrival, all were cheerfully greeted, introduced, in-briefed, and immediately put to work. Each Cadet was able to significantly contribute to care packages designed for individual Soldiers as well as packages for families, small units, and entire congregations up to 75 people. All

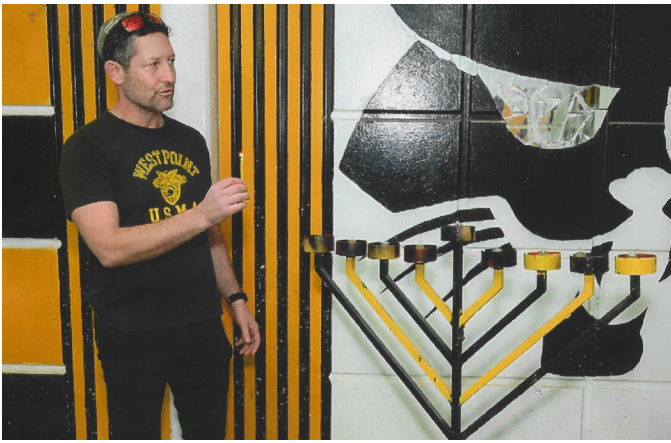
worked alongside other volunteers (e.g., school kids, local Jewish congregants, Dr. Yasmine Kalkstein and son (Matan), spouses of deployed service members, retirees, etc.). The Cadets did a wonderful job interacting with Rockland County volunteers, answering questions, 'telling the Army story,' and learning a bit about the logistics of sending supplies to forward deployed troops. Care packages were bound for places such as Latvia, Italy, UK, Germany, Korea, and other locations. Overall, Kosher Troops send more than 150 packages to more than 70 locations.



Cadets Brandon Agran (Hillel Cadet in Charge) and Sophie Cohen (Jewish Choir Cadet in Charge) packing care packages.



Cadets and West Point leadership getting briefed on the Kosher Troop mission and the day's care package operations.



West Point Jewish Chapel Siddurim Serve as Bridge to IDF Soldiers.



Celebrating Hanukkah with a combat engineering unit of the Judea and Samaria Brigade. Pictured here are Elad Yoran (USMA '91), Board Member of the WPJCF and two IDF soldiers, MSG Yigal Deitcher, and MAJ Liron Passover.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

HANUKKAH NEAR AND FAR

Cadets celebrate the Festival of Lights, and IDF Soldiers Receive a Hanukkah surprise from our Rockbound Highland Home

Jewish tradition calls for Torah scrolls, prayer books, ritual objects and even art or photographs with God's name on it to be buried with respect, rather than thrown out. So, it was with sorrow that the West Point Jewish Chapel community faced the prospect of burying more than 200 siddurim that were damaged by water from a leak in the Chapel roof in July 2023.

These siddurim, published by the JWB in 1984, had been in use in the chapel since its opening in 1985. Everyone who participated in Chapel services over the years is familiar with their plain black binding and cover, inscribed on the front with gold letters in Hebrew, "סדור תפילות לחיילי צבא ארצות הברית" and in English, "Prayer Book for Jewish Personnel in the Armed Forces of the United States."

When Chaplain Frommer shared the difficult question of the siddurim with Board member Elad Yoran (USMA '91), West Point class of 1991, an idea was born: to ship the siddurim to Israel. Elad had moved to Israel two years previously and would receive them and find a place for them there. With Melanie Ullah's help, two large boxes, each weighing about 40 pounds, were packed and shipped. They arrived in Israel and sat, for the most part, undisturbed in Elad's office.

Then came the terrible massacre of more than 1,200 on Shabbat, Simchat Torah, October 7, 2023. And within days, Team IMA was conceived, an initiative born out of necessity: that behind every soldier is a team of imas (mothers in Hebrew), to provide needed gear to IDF soldiers and hundreds of thousands of reservists called up for the fight against Hamas and Hezbollah. Volunteers in Israel and across the US came together to source supplies and equipment and deliver them to soldiers facing Hamas terrorists at IDF bases and outposts along the Gaza strip and in the West Bank and defending against Hezbollah attacks along the Northern border.

With each delivery of gear, the clear message, "We are behind you. People across the United States are behind you." And, with the addition of the siddurim, the message expanded, "We are connected in other ways too. Jews also serve in the US Army. Here is a siddur for American soldiers. A gift for you, so you will know that we are with you in spirit too."

One box of siddurim was given to soldiers of Givati, one of Israel's five infantry brigades, and a unit that has seen months of intense combat and suffered heavy casualties throughout Gaza. The second box of siddurim was given to the combat engineering unit of the Judea and Samaria Brigade, a unit that has been combatting terrorists in places like Jenin and Tulkarem in the West Bank. Most IDF soldiers had no idea that Jews also served in the US Army. Beyond surprise, the reaction to the siddurim was powerful. Several of the siddurim had presumably belonged to Jewish soldiers in the US Army. One of the soldiers of the combat engineering battalion showed Elad a Post-It note in the siddur he received. On it was the name of a US Army sergeant killed in Iraq in 2006. He asked whether to return the siddur. Elad told him to keep it, just to remember his name and the bond between all of us.

As Operation Iron Swords continues, these siddurim connect Israeli soldiers with American Jewish soldiers today and with those who fought in the sands of the Middle East in recent decades, and they connect all of us to the Jews who served and wore the uniform and fought and sacrificed over the centuries.

Most IDF soldiers had no idea that Jews also served in the US Army. The reaction to the siddurim was powerful. They were surprised. But, even more so, they were touched, inspired, and grateful for the connection to their American Brothers and Sisters in Arms.



Cadets celebrate Hannukah at the Jewish Chapel.



Participants at the 17th Annual Aleph Institute Military Symposium including LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick (President, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund), COL Ben Wallen (Office of the Dean and West Point Jewish Lay Leader), MAJ Michael Greenberg (Trip Coordinator and Department of History), CDT Ben Dubetsky (Trip CIC), and 14 other Cadets and one Cadet Candidate from the United States Military Academy Preparatory School.

RELIGIOUS CLUB – HILLEL

ALEPH CONFERENCE 2024

On the weekend of 29 February to 3 March 2024, 15 Cadets, 1 Cadet Candidate, and 2 faculty members from West Point participated in the 17th Annual Aleph Institute Military Symposium in Surfside, Florida. Participants from the full joint community to United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) Cadets and the USAFA Jewish Chaplain came together at the Shul for faith, fellowship, and training focused on providing support to our Soldiers and Jewish communities wherever deployed or stationed. The theme for the conference addressed resilience, readiness, and moral clarity within crisis. Guest speakers included CH (BG) Jack Stumme (US Army Deputy Chief of Chaplains), MG Scott Jackson (US SOUTHCOM Chief of Staff), CSM (Ret) Gary Ginzburg (National Vice Commander of the Jewish War Veterans), CH (COL-Ret) Sanford “Sandy” Dresin (Rabbi for the Pentagon and Aleph Institute’s Director of Military Programs and Endorser for US Military, VA and Secret Service Chaplains), CH (COL) Ari Soussan (National Defense University – former West Point Jewish Chaplain), Col Tzachi Dotan (Israeli Defense Force Rabbinate), and many more.

There were four different breakout sessions focused on relevant topics for current Jewish Lay Leaders and potential future Lay Leaders (i.e., USMA and USAFA Cadets). One such session was a discussion regarding successful designated religious group leader (DRGL) programming co-led by COL Ben Wallen (West Point Jewish Lay Leader) and CH (MAJ) Elie Estrin (Aleph Institute’s Military Personnel Liaison and Executive Assistant to the Endorser). Cadets were introduced to the conference participants and had numerous engagement opportunities with symposium participants across all service components and LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick (USMA ’69 and President of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund) and CH (COL) Shmuel Felzenberg (former West Point Jewish Chaplain). During the weekend, the group attended a variety of services, group meals, participated in religious traditions (e.g., putting on tefillin), and shared in Havdalah with their sponsor families who housed our Cadets for the duration of the conference. It was an absolutely wonderful experience! The weekend was made possible through superb support from the Directorate of Cadet Activities and the coordination efforts of MAJ Michael Greenberg and Mrs. Elaine McConnell.



Maximizing engagement opportunities with significant leaders.



West Point participants in conference with Chaplain (COL-Ret) Sanford “Sandy” Dresin (Rabbi for the Pentagon and Aleph Institute’s Director of Military Programs and Endorser for US Military, VA and Secret Service Chaplains) and Chaplain (MAJ) Elie Estrin (Aleph Institute’s Military Personnel Liaison and Executive Assistant to the Endorser).



Lay Leaders from across branches of service and West Point Cadets attending a discussion regarding programming, support, and inclusion for the community led by Chaplain (MAJ) Elie Estrin (Aleph Institute’s Military Personnel Liaison and Executive Assistant to the Endorser) and COL Ben Wallen (West Point Jewish Lay Leader).



Strengthening bonds between USMA and USAFA Cadets during breaks between sessions as well as at Cadet Program events such as the discussion led by Chaplain (MAJ) Tzvi Teitelbaum – USAR and Chaplain (CAPT) Levy Pekar – USAF.

WHAT DID THIS WEEKEND MEAN TO YOU?

“This weekend was an excellent opportunity for me to learn how best I can support Jewish personnel and serve their spiritual needs in the Army. Having learned the different ways I can plan proactively and leverage resources, I know I will support Jewish life wherever I go in the military. Much gratitude to the Aleph Institute and the Jewish Chapel Fund for this amazing experience.”

– CDT Aidan Djavadi '26

“The Aleph Conference trip was such an informative experience about the importance of faith, spirituality, chaplains, and lay leaders in the military community both deployed and in garrison. It was also very eye opening to see the different perspectives of all the branches and countries in their philosophy of the usage of chaplains.”

– CDT Daniel Clare '27

“To me, this weekend was a fantastic opportunity to learn about Judaism in the military and to connect with Jewish chaplains and service members. I was also able to gain an understanding of the issues and concerns facing Jewish service members in the operational Army, which will better prepare me to help my future Jewish Soldiers upon commissioning from West Point.”

– CDT William Julka '27

“The small group discussion sessions enabled us to discuss officership and how to be an effective Lay Leader.”

– CDT Ben Dubetsky '24

“I think the most important part of the trip for me was seeing successful Jews serving across all branches and being able to reconnect with people from last year. I also

got to connect with the Chaplain serving at my next duty location.”

– CDT Rachel Radvinsky '24

“This weekend I learned how important the spirituality pillar is to Soldiers on an individual level and how it builds upwards to make more cohesive and combat ready units. Before this weekend, I was under the impression that spirituality was strictly about religion but have realized it encompasses a Soldier’s sense of purpose regarding their profession and life, which has sparked internal reflection in my life as well. Additionally, I have a better understanding of the needs of my future Jewish Soldiers in any unit that I may be part of and how I can support them as a Jewish Lay Leader.”

– CDT Ian Campbell '26



Group Photo outside the Naval Academy Jewish Chapel.

RELIGIOUS CLUB – HILLEL

JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND

On the weekend of 5 to 7 April 2024, 25 Cadets from West Point joined 16 Midshipmen from Navy, 15 Cadets from U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), 1 ROTC Cadet from Yale, and 1 ROTC Cadet from the University of Kentucky for faith, fellowship, and fun. The U.S. Naval Academy hosted a superb Jewish Warrior Weekend organized by Midshipmen (MIDN) Caroline Bilbray-Kohn, MIDN Ellie Kaufman, and MIDN Sam Levine. The weekend included meals, PT, challah making, trivia, a tour of the Naval Academy, Shabbat services led by the Midshipmen, a presentation by the Jewish War Veterans, breakout sessions with experiences shared from Jewish Officers across all branches of service, two guest speakers, and team building in our Nation's Capital.

The two guest speakers included Dr. Eric Goralnick (medical director for Gillette Stadium and the New England Patriots) and Dr. Frank Luntz (Jewish American political consultant and communications specialist). Both conversations were meaningful and impactful. The engagement orchestrated by Dr. Luntz led to additional opportunities on Saturday involving a tour of the United States Capitol led by former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy and a night viewing and discussion at the Vietnam Memorial. Other significant participants of the JWW included CH (LCDR) Yonina Creditor (USNA Chaplain), CH (Capt) Saul Rappeport (USAFA Chaplain), CH (MAJ) Heather Borshof (USMA Chaplain), RADM (Ret) Paul Becker (USNA '83 and President, Friends of the Jewish Chapel), MG (Ret) Jeff Jacobs (USMA '79 and Chairman, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund), LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick (USMA '69 and President, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund), COL (Ret) Barry Lischinsky (National Commander, Jewish War Veterans), CSM (Ret) Gary Ginsburg (National Vice Commander, Jewish War Veterans), and Hadassah Nitzan (Director of Operations and Outreach, JWB Jewish Chaplains Council).

The desired outcome of fostering spiritual growth and camaraderie throughout the joint service community of future Jewish leaders was successfully achieved. The weekend was made possible by the generous and professional support by the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund, the Henry & Sylvia Yaschik Foundation, Mrs. Helen Griffin, the Jewish War Veterans, and Temple Brith Shalom Beth Israel.



Challah Making



Navy Midshipmen Leadership preparing the trivia game.



Leadership from West Point Jewish Chapel Fun, Navy Friends of the Jewish Chapel, and Jewish War Veterans sharing thoughts about how to provide continued support to future Jewish Warrior Weekends while Cadets and Midshipmen engage in the trivia challenge in the background.



left to right) Guest Speakers included the Deputy Commandant of the Naval Academy, Dr. Frank Luntz (Jewish American political consultant and communications specialist), COL (Ret) Barry Lischinsky (National Commander, Jewish War Veterans), CSM (Ret) Gary Ginsburg (National Vice Commander, Jewish War Veterans), Hadassah Nitzan (Director of Operations and Outreach, JWB Jewish Chaplains Council), Dr. Eric Goralnick (medical director for Gillette Stadium and the New England Patriots)



Special Tour of Dr. Frank Luntz's home and historical archives along with LTC (Ret) Terry Bresnick (President, West Point Jewish Chapel Fund) and Tim Coben (Vice President, Hillel International and member of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund).



Tour of Dr. Frank Luntz's home.



An opportunity to talk with former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy.



Tour of the United States Capitol led by former Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy.



WHAT DID PARTICIPATING IN JEWISH WARRIOR WEEKEND MEAN TO YOU?

"JWW gave me an opportunity to connect with my Jewish counterparts at USNA and USAFA and learn more about their experiences being Jewish cadets at their respective service academies. I hope to use the knowledge I have gained from this weekend to more actively intertwine my Jewish identity and my identity as a future Army officer."

– Cadet Sophia Levitt '27

"Jewish Warrior Weekend allows me to connect with fellow Jews in uniform. On this trip, I made lifelong friends, experienced once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, and deepened friendships with my fellow Jewish Cadets."

– Cadet Aiden Djavadi '26

"This trip was one of the most meaningful Jewish events I have been to while at West Point. Being able to see the military and the Capitol from a Jewish perspective and with Jewish cadets, midshipmen, and officers gave me an appreciation for what I am doing and where I am."

– Cadet Ron Chajmovic '26

"This weekend inspired me to continue nurturing my Jewish identity with my friends through service. Directly, by serving as an officer and later in life by giving back and developing the Jewish civil military ties."

– Cadet Claudia Brodsky '26

"This trip allowed me to develop new connections with Jewish Cadets and Midshipmen and learn about how each service is different. I loved hearing from Dr. Luntz, as it made me think about how my Jewish identity relates to my service and the way that they are deeply interconnected in my life."

– CDT Daniel Gologorsky '26

"This trip section was immensely meaningful to me. I truly felt, as I always do when in this group, like I was part of a big family. It's amazing to see that the bond that we have among Jewish Cadets here at West Point extends to the other academies. Going from feeling as though I had no "real" affiliation with the Jewish community here to getting to explore new cities with Jewish plebes from

all around the country was so surreal and so fulfilling."

– CDT Clementine Bondor '27

"The most meaningful part of Jewish Warrior Weekend was discussing our commitment to serve as American Jewish Soldiers. My favorite part of the trip was the tour of Dr. Luntz's house and the Capitol."

– Cadet Colby Keck '27

"Jewish Warrior Weekend means community and perspective. Being surrounded by so many great minds, all with such different experiences, equips us with the tools to be better leaders and Jewish Officers in the future."

– Cadet Sam Steinhart '26



Enjoying the best view of Washington DC with Dr. Frank Luntz on the balcony of the United States Capitol.

WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

WEST POINT COMMUNITY PASSOVER SEDER





WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL

FULL CIRCLE: MELANIE ULLAH REFLECTS ON HER TIME AT THE JEWISH CHAPEL

Melanie Ullah has been a fixture of the Jewish Chapel since 2002, when she arrived at West Point for her first tour as a Chaplain's Assistant (56M) to Chaplain (then MAJ) Carlos Huerta. Melanie oversaw all daily operations, Shabbat and holiday services, maintenance, meetings, logistics, and a variety of other tasks. After her Army career, which took her all over the world, including to Iraq for a combat deployment, she eventually found her way back to the Chapel (or, some might say, the Chapel found its way back to her). She now serves as the Administrator for the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund – a welcome and familiar face to both old grads and cadets alike as they come through the doors of the Chapel.



Melanie as a young non-commissioned officer.

Military career: Melanie entered the Army in June 2002, as a Chaplain's Assistant (56M). Her first Duty Station was West Point, NY, at the Jewish Chapel. She served at West Point until October 2004, then moved to Fort Riley Kansas

to join 3rd Brigade HHD 125th, from November 2004 until June 2006, with a combat deployment to Taji, Iraq from January 2005 until January 2006.

Melanie has four adult children, ages 20 to 26; two of whom were born at West Point, in June 2003. She currently lives in New Windsor, NY.

What inspired you to join the Army?

I come from a long line of Veterans, and my younger brother had recently joined the Army. He came home from AIT talking to me about joining, highlighting the benefits for my young family. After talking to his recruiter, I decided to join also.

Did you pick the 56M (Chaplain's Assistant) MOS, or did the Army pick it for you?

I picked the 56M MOS. I have a bachelor's degree in English, with a Media Journalism concentration. My first choice was Public Affairs, as I thought hands-on experience would be a key factor in a successful career in broadcasting. Unfortunately, the slot would not be open for six months. At the time, I was already 32 years old, married, and had 2 small children. I knew that if I was really going to join the Army, I had to do it then. I went back through all the available jobs and chose Chaplain's Assistant. It was a great match for me based on my strong background in serving at my local church my entire life. I could truly serve God and country.

What was your experience like as the Chaplain's assistant at the West Point Jewish Chapel?

I was blessed to have the greatest



Melanie with her children after graduating from basic training.

Chaplain, Rabbi Carlos Huerta as my first Army chaplain. He was, and still is, a great inspiration to me. He was a "lead from the front" kind of Officer and mentored me in many ways. I got to experience what being part of the UMT meant to cadets and Army personnel alike. Those lessons proved fruitful during my time deployed to Iraq.

Were there any surprises or eye-opening situations?

During that time in my life, I was a Christian Woman, married to a Muslim man, and just learned that I would be working for the Jewish chaplain. I was surprised at how the Jewish community embraced me as one of their own. Many of those relationships I am blessed to still have today.

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ALUMNI REFLECTIONS

Captain (Ret.) Jack Hayne, USMA '49, Korean War Veteran

By Ramona L. Jones, USMA '05
Tablets Editor

Editor's note: I conducted this interview with Jack Hayne at his assisted living residence on 25 February. It was my first time meeting him, and we had a lovely visit. He was very happy to talk about his experience at West Point, proud of his Jewish heritage, and still very much engaged in his life-long passion for fencing. He remained head-over-heels for his wife, Pearl, who passed away in 2021. I was looking forward to returning to Jack with a completed draft of the interview, but he passed away a month later, on 26 March, before I could finish it.

Jack Hayne, USMA Class of 1949, turned 100 in January 2024, and currently resides in Westbury, New York.

Jack was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1924. He was drafted into the Army in 1943, ultimately attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant. After World War 2, he entered West Point as a member of the Class of 1949. He served in the Korean War for 19 months. Later in his career, he served as an instructor of electronics, air defense systems, and nuclear weapons at the NATO School of Special Weapons in Germany. He retired from the Army in 1964. His decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, the World War II Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal with seven battle starts, the United Nations Medal, and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation.

As a civilian, Jack worked for Grumman Aerospace as a project

engineer, developing training devices and simulators for Navy aircraft from 1964 – 1988. He was married to his beloved wife, Pearl, on Graduation Day under crossed sabers at the Old Cadet Chapel, and has two children, Nancy (deceased) and Mitchell, along with one grandson, a great-grandson, and a great grand-daughter on the way.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

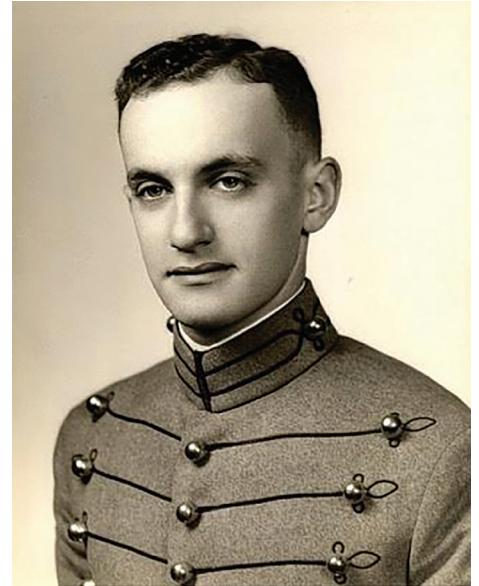
Why did you want to go to West Point?

My grandfather had a 160-acre farm in Livingston Manor, New York. The Ontario West Railroad passes West Point, turns east towards Erie, and then to Livingston Manor where the farm is. I would see these cadets [on the train] in uniform. I thought, "I'd like to go there." These actually weren't cadets – they were Soldiers in khaki – but I didn't know that. I was just a kid. Years later, when I was in the service, I tried to get into West Point and I got an appointment.

I studied book-keeping, typing, and short hand in high school. No algebra, analytical geometry, none of that. You know where I was [in class rank]? When I started after Beast Barracks, I was in Section 9 because my last name started with H. The next grading period was two months later. I ended up in Section 23. I worked my way back up with an instructor who told me he would keep me with him as a student. That's how I learned math.

What was your journey to get to West Point?

I was originally drafted into the service. Before that, I had gotten a government job, in order to avoid being



drafted. I was working at Aberdeen Proving Ground. I worked on the first grenade launcher, I worked on tanks, and I was getting forty cents an hour, so I quit and went to work at Glen L. Martin

Continued on page 25

IN MEMORIAM

LTG BENNETT LEWIS, USA (RET), USMA '50

A SUPERB EXAMPLE OF THE “GREATEST GENERATION”

Ben Lewis was born on June 18, 1926 in Boston, MA and passed away at the age of 96 on April 5, 2023 in Melbourne, FL. He is interred in the West Point Cemetery and is survived by his wife of 71 years, Malvene Wolseley

Following graduation from West Point, he branched Engineer and served in increasing levels of responsibility as an Army engineer, in the Pentagon in DOD, and in the private sector with The Sverdrup Corp and Louis Berger.

Ben served in three wars – as an enlisted engine mechanic crew chief in WWII, as a 2d Lieutenant in an Engineer Battalion in Korea, and a

family were invited to the Oval Office by President Reagan. With cabinet members and agency heads present (CIA, OSD and more), the president capped Ben's distinguished career with the award of the National Security Medal (51st recipient) for his role in leading development of critical national security capabilities that directly contributed to the demise of the Soviet Union. He also was the Deputy Director of FEMA – a fitting position for an Army engineer.

Ben applied his service ethic and engineering expertise as a VP for Sverdrup Corporation, Deputy Program Manager, Embassy Task Group assisting the State Department in the design and construction of new secure embassies world-wide; directed the construction of 35,000 seat amphitheater for Expo Pilipino (a world fair organized as part of the 100th anniversary of independence for the Philippines). In 1996, Ben led construction of the Pampanga Megadike that channeled the flow of lahar runoff following the catastrophic eruption of the Mt. Pinatubo volcano, preventing further damage to the region. Ben was a member

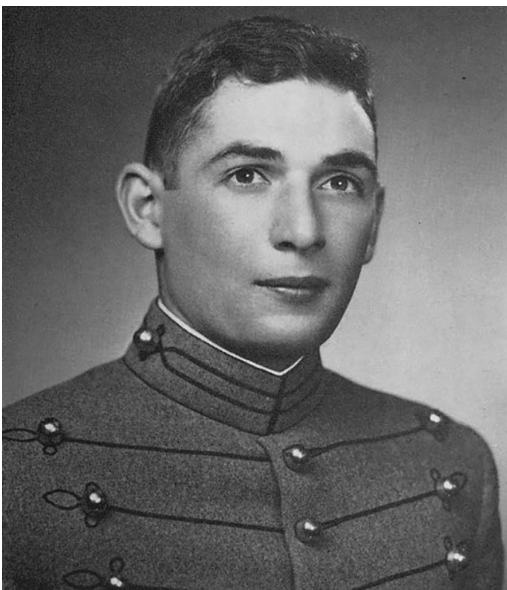
of 4-man team that met in Moscow with Deputy Foreign Minister, Srpska, obtaining the

Serb position on resolving conflict with other residual elements of former Yugoslavia.

Well done, Be Thou at Peace.

**By LTC Robert D. Wolff, USA (R),
Class of 1965**

Sources: Obituary and Memorial Article written by COL(R) Deb Lewis, USMA '80 and CDR(R) Alan Lewis, USNA '80



Malanot Lewis, his sons Michael and Alan, and daughter Debra Lewis. He was a member of the West Point Jewish Chapel, along with 20 Jewish classmates and was the last surviving member of that group. He was a member of the group of West Point graduates and other Jewish leaders to raise funds for the West Point Jewish Chapel, dedicated in 1984.

commanding officer of an Engineer Battalion in Vietnam. His final engineer assignment was with the North Atlantic Division, USACE during which time he was responsible for building two air bases in Israel as part of the Camp David Accords. Ben's significant accomplishments stayed under the radar until shortly after retirement, Ben and his

JEWISH GRADUATE DEATHS IN 2022 - 2024

CLASSES 1940 - 1970

(AS OF APRIL 1, 2024)

We remember the following Jewish graduates and thank them for their service to our country.

CLASS OF 1949

Jack Hayne,
March 26, 2024

CLASS OF 1950

LTG Bennett L. Lewis, USA(R),
April 5, 2023 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

COL Edward C. West, USA(R),
August 20, 2022 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

CLASS OF 1951

LTC Alan M. Dean, USA(R),
March 14, 2023 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

CLASS OF 1954

Ira Coron,
February 19, 2024

CLASS OF 1955

COL Judson C. Faurer, USAF(R),
August 14, 2022 ⁽¹⁾

S.J. Freed,
June 8, 2022

CLASS OF 1956

LTC Gerald D. Goldberg, USA(R),
December 15, 2022

LTC Norman Levy, USA(R),
December 23, 2023 ⁽²⁾

CLASS OF 1958

John L. Isaacson,
February 6, 2023

CLASS OF 1959

LTC Stephen K. Klein, USA(R),
August 26, 2022

CLASS OF 1960

Rand Edelstein,
December 29, 2022

Harold Lusky,
December 16, 2022

CLASS OF 1971

Jeffrey B. Weinstock,
March 11, 2023

CLASS OF 1973

Lee R. Pollock,
March 19, 2022

Sanford R. Rubinstein,
December 12, 2023

NOTES:

⁽¹⁾ Buried in West Point Cemetery

⁽²⁾ On the Wall of Honor in West Point Jewish Chapel

REMEMBERING THE ORIGINS OF WEST POINT'S JEWISH CHAPEL

In 1968, the concept of a Jewish Chapel at West Point was first discussed between the President of the West Point Society of New York, Col. Mert Singer, Class of 1938, and the Superintendent, Lt.Gen. Bennett. “Mert discussed with me the needs of the Jewish

**By Lt.Col. Robert D. Wolff,
Ph.D., USA (Ret), '65**

Guest Author

community at West Point for a Jewish Chapel. The basic responsibility would rest with the Department of the Army. We, at the Academy, would be responsible for the initial requirement and then make our recommendation to the Department of the Army.” Colonel Singer at the time was a lawyer with the firm Granik, Garson, Silverman & Nowicki and was asked to be responsible for the planning for the construction of the Jewish Chapel.

The kick-off meeting of the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund (WPJCF) was held in the office of S. Lichtenberg and Company on June 18, 1968. In attendance were USMA graduates Herb Lichtenberg, '55, Colonel Mert Singer, '38, and Rabbi Avraham Soltes, USMA Chaplain. The purpose of the WPJCF was to raise the funds for the planning, design and construction of the Jewish Chapel at West Point. The WPJCF then formed a Board of Directors that included the above USMA graduates as well as Milton Laitman '39, Robert Lawrence Jan'43, Arthur Sirkis '54, Henry Spielman '50, and Louis Gross '54. At the next meeting on October 9, 1968, additional USMA graduates joined the Board to become

Charter Members, including Elliot Heit, '50, Saul Horowitz '46, and Edwin Marks '49.

In a Statement by President Jimmy Carter on June 17, 1977, he stated: “Both as Commander-In-Chief and as a graduate of one of West Point's sister academies, I believe that the spiritual development of our armed forces is as vital as any other aspect of growth. The Chapel as a museum will contribute to the education of all cadets, regardless of religion, and to the knowledge of many thousands of visitors. And in a broader sense, the Chapel will symbolize both the rich diversity of our nation and its fundamental unity.”

Point. In addition to providing a place of worship for our Jewish cadets, officers, and members of the community and their families, the Gallery and Museum will recognize the contribution of Jewish graduates of West Point have made to our nation's progress over the 176 years since Joseph Swift and Simon Levy formed the first graduating class of 1802.”

On May 19, 1979, the Jewish Chapel Board met with USMA Superintendent Maj.Gen. Samuel Koster and the Honorable Arthur Levitte, Comptroller of the State of New York, to discuss steps needed to construct the Chapel at West Point. A Cornerstone Ceremony was held at the site of the new Jewish Chapel on September 20, 1983. In attendance were Herbert Ames, President of the West



In 1978, the USMA Superintendent, Lt. Gen. Goodpaster, reaffirmed support for the construction of a Jewish Chapel to be located between the Cadet Chapel and the Catholic Chapel. “The Jewish Chapel will fill a long-standing need at West

Point Jewish Chapel Fund, Edward I Koch, Major of New York City, Lt.Gen. Willard W. Scott, Jr., Superintendent, USMA.

**TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE
OF THE TABLETS**



JEWISH CHAPEL CHOIR SPRING SEMESTER CHOIR ACTIVITIES

The Jewish Chapel Choir weekly rehearsals under the direction and tutelage of Cadet Celeste Pollack Lamirand have been extraordinary. In addition to expanding the repertoire, these practices have focused on voice technique and performance preparation.

The Choir recently performed at Castle Point Veterans' Administration, providing a program of patriotic pieces. Following the performance, members of the choir had the opportunity to speak with the veterans who represent Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and National Guard. These veterans served during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the First Gulf War and the Cold War. They also served the nation in peacetime missions around the world. The conversations between cadets and these veterans were both interesting and instructive.

No spring semester would be complete without a seder. The choir added their wonderful voices to both the Community Seder held at the Club and the Cadet led Seder at the Jewish Chapel.

Upcoming events for the choir include providing musical selections for the Academy's Days of Remembrance event sponsored by the Equal Opportunity Office and facilitated by Dr. David Frey and the Center for Holocaust and Genocide. This year's program features documentary film maker Ms. Paula Apsell of Leading Edge Productions discussing her film Resistance: They Fought Back.

Looking toward the end of the academic year in May, the Choir will assist with the Mickey Marcus remembrance at the Jewish Chapel on May 5th and will provide musical selections for the Class of 2024 Baccalaureate celebration on May 24th.

Plans are already in the works for a fall semester trip to sunny Florida!



WHAT THIS TRIP SECTION MEANT TO ME

"The most important thing to me was the time we got to talk to the veterans. They had some great stories and I feel like I could have talked to them for hours."

– CDT Aaron DeBlasi '27

"This trip was super impactful because we got to spend some time and have quality conversations with our local veterans. Being able to sing for them and have them be able to connect with our younger generation was a great experience."

– CDT Jonathan Benchabat '27

"This is one of the more impactful trips. Singing for and speaking with those veterans helped me realize why I'm here at West Point in the first place, and how I want to be when I graduate."

– Lucas Schwed '26

TODAH RABAH!

thank you

Sebastian Djavadi & Family: Purim Party (14 March)

Jewish War Veterans of Kings County: Oneg Shabbat (22 March)

Hudson Valley Region Federation of

Jewish Men's Clubs: Oneg Shabbat (12 April)

JWV of the USA, Dept of NY: Oneg Shabbat (26 April)

Kofinas Family: Oneg Shabbat (3 May)

David Everett, & the Justice Brandeis Law Society.: Oneg Shabbat (10 May)

Tammi Ryley: Baccalaureate Flowers and Decorations (22 May)

DONATIONS TO THE WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL FUND

We are very fortunate that there has been an increase in interest, participation and attendance at the programs, services and meals at the West Point Jewish Chapel. Obviously, that increases our need to raise more money to support our cadets. Please consider making a donation to support our work. You can give to one of the following areas. If you would like to speak further about your support, please contact the Chapel and we can help.

Our most pressing needs

- Meals
- Trips
- Jewish Chapel Choir trips
- Cadet attendance at lay leadership training



WEST POINT JEWISH CHAPEL UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY

5 May
Mickey Marcus Memorial Service

22 May
Baccalaureate Service

25 May
Graduation of the Class of 2024
(*Mazel tov!*)

JULY

1 July
R-Day for the Class of 2028

21 July
New Cadet Visitation Day (marking the transition from first to second detail of Cadet Basic Training, or "Beast")

AUGUST

12 August
Beast March Back (the culminating event for Beast)

17 August
Acceptance Day (New Cadets are accepted into the Corps of Cadets)

23 August
Ring Weekend & Plebe Retreat

SEPTEMBER

13-15 September
Jewish Warrior Weekend
Hosted by USMA

OCTOBER

2-4 October
Rosh Hashanah

11-12 October
Yom Kippur

11-12 October
West Point Family Weekend

16-23 October
Sukkot

DECEMBER

4 December
Branch Night

You came to West Point shortly after 9/11. What was that day like for you?

I was living in Durham, NC. I had just returned to work after having my second child. I was driving to work when the news began to cover the first plane, then the second hitting the towers.

As a native New Yorker, with so many of my family and friends living and working in the area, I immediately ran to the phone and started calling loved ones. As you recall, none of the phones in NY were working, so it was several hours before I was able to reach anyone. My younger brother who I mentioned earlier enlisted right after this.

What were some of your biggest challenges as the Chaplain's assistant?

West Point is unlike any other duty station; so, my family and I had a rude awakening when we arrived at Fort Riley, KS. It seemed like overnight; my focus was no longer submitting my purchase orders in time for the Passover seder but qualifying at the range in preparation for a year's long deployment. I had not touched a weapon since basic training. Upon signing in at reception, I learned that the unit I was deploying with was not there, but at NTC in Fort Irwin, CA training for the quickly approaching deployment. Training I never received.

What are some of your favorite memories as the Chaplain's assistant?

Some of my favorite memories are of course from my time at West Point. I am proud of the work I did here. As NCOIC of the Jewish chapel, I took pride in paying attention to detail, and ensuring every event held here was a success. I received my first Commendation Medal for Jewish Warrior Weekend Fall of 2002. I remember the support from the Rabbi, the Jewish community, and the WPJCF



Melanie with Chaplain (MAJ) Borshof at a recital for Cantor Sonya Zelle, the guest cantor who has been serving the Jewish chapel for the last two semesters.

as I prepared for the birth of my babies, the Promotion Board, and my promotion ceremony and reception held in the chapel.

How does it feel to have come full circle and now be the Administrator for the WPJCF?

I always enjoyed the beauty and serenity of the Jewish chapel and West Point as a whole. I was thrilled when Lou Gross and Scott Lichtenberg offered me the job at the end of a short interview. I had fond memories of Mr. Gross, Herb Lichtenberg, and Lew Zickel from my Chaplain Assistant days. I knew firsthand of the love and dedication the three of these great men had for the Jewish chapel and the Jewish program here at West Point, so I try to approach my duties with the same attention to detail that was cultivated here over 20 years ago. I was

super excited to learn people like Al and Ruth Beitler, Elanie McConnell, Harry Garten, and Max Maxfield were still here when I arrived. It was like coming home again!

What is a typical day like for you?

Aside from WPJCF admin duties, and Jewish chapel admin duties, a workday is dictated by the cadet and Jewish holiday calendar. With the Army-wide personnel shortage, we are feeling it here at the chapel also. Currently, West Point only has the three 56M who are shared across all chapels and congregations. With that being said, I often put on my old Chaplain's Assistant hat to ensure the continued success of the Jewish program.

What advice would you like to give to this year's graduating class?

NCOs Lead the Way!

Congratulations to the Class of 2024

As we depart from thee... Serving on land or sea



Sophie R. Cohen
Medical Corps
Medical School of Wisconsin



Jared Q. Ryley
Ordnance
Eglin Air Force Base, AK



Daniel M. Tahbaz
Military Intelligence
Fort Campbell, KY



Rafael W. Nachman
Military Intelligence (Branch
Detail Infantry)
Fort Lewis WA



Brandon A. Agran
Armor
Vilseck, Germany



Riley C. Furlong
Armor
Vilseck, Germany



Benjamin J. Dubetsky
Armor
Fort Cavazos, TX



Samuel H. Greenberg
Military Intelligence (Branch
Detail Infantry)
Fort Campbell, KY



Lilian J. Richards
Cyber
Fort Eisenhower



Shai E. Bennett
Aviation
Fort Novosel, AL



Gideon S. Rothschild
Field Artillery
Fort Bliss, TX



**Celeste A.
Pollack-Lamirand**
Infantry
Fort Riley, KS



David A. Sharp
Armor
Fort Irwin, CA



Jacob J. Goldberg
Armor
Fort Stewart, GA



Ariya C. Bradley
Field Artillery
Fort Cavazos, TX



Elijah A. Banks
Infantry
Fort Carson, CO

*Thanks to Academy Photo for once again
providing pictures of our graduating cadets.*

Aircraft. While I was there I worked on B26 parts. Then I was drafted.

What was your experience as Jewish cadet at West Point?

I had absolutely no problem whatsoever. The worst part of being a Jewish cadet was having to walk from Grant Hall to the Old Cadet Chapel [in the cemetery]. In the wintertime, if the rabbi couldn't make it down from Vassar, the cadets would have to do the service. I used to end up doing it. As a plebe.

During Passover, they asked the youngest cadets to do the Four Questions. No one wanted to do it. I wasn't the youngest – I was 22 – but I was a plebe, so I did it.

We had one trip. We went up to Poughkeepsie, and that was that. Now you can go to Israel.

What did your friends and family think about you attending West Point?

My family was happy – remember, there was a war going on, so if I was at West Point, I wouldn't be getting shot



at. But my friends were furious. The FBI went around asking them questions. I would get letters from my friends, wondering, "What have you done? The FBI is checking on you."

Before I entered West Point, I was living in Crotona Park in the Bronx. I had known Pearl, my girlfriend (and future wife) for two and half months. We were

going to her cousin's apartment one day. I stopped her on the staircase on the way up and said, "Pearl, let's get married." She said, "Are you crazy?" She didn't want to be a war widow. When I found out that I had an appointment to West Point, we had to wait four more years, until I graduated. She was my "OAO" – One and Only. I believe we were the first couple to get married in the Old Cadet Chapel.

What advice would you give to this year's Jewish graduates and your fellow Jewish old grads?

Stay in the service. It's the best thing that you can do. I'm not sorry I stayed in for 20 years. My wife was my camp follower for 14 years. She loved being an Army wife. She was a doll.

[Jack Hayne's Obituary](#)

(posted by his son, Mitch Hayne)



OLD GRAD SPOTLIGHT



Brittney Brengel '07 (nee Berkoff) celebrates her graduation from Denver College of Nursing in March 2024, alongside her husband, Kyle Brengel '05.



MAJ David Del Cuadro-Zimmerman '07 rubs elbows with the Commander in Chief during a Marine One takeoff in March 2024. Dave is currently serving as a Defense Legislative Analyst at the Office of Management and Budget.

THE JEWS OF WEST POINT

BEING JEWISH AT WEST POINT IS WONDERFUL. WE'RE A SMALL COMMUNITY, 136 OF 4,400, BUT WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR REPRESENTING OUR PEOPLE.

By **CDT Aidan D. Djavadi**

February 22, 2024

Published with permission of the editor of the Jewish Journal.

I'm a Jewish cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. We exist and we've been here since the beginning. This is our story.

I'm your average American Jew. My father is an Iranian immigrant and my mother's family fled the pogroms of Eastern Europe. I had my bar mitzvah, traveled to Israel, was dragged by my parents to synagogue for the High Holy Days and observed the occasional Shabbat. My Yom Kippur fast never lasted more than a few hours and our Passover seders always took too long.

I always saw myself as an American soldier and wanted to go to West Point. My application was rejected so I went to University of Arizona, where I majored in Arabic and Political Science while doing Army ROTC. Every Shabbat I joined other Jewish students at the Chabad just down the street from my apartment for Rabbi Yossi Winner's Shabbat extravaganzas. But my heart remained set on West Point. Eventually I was accepted and left Arizona. It took saying goodbye for me appreciate it.

In June, 2022, I drove with my parents to West Point, the real-life Hogwarts I'd call home for four years. I was one of the 1,209 admitted students in the class of 2026 arriving for six weeks of cadet basic



Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images

training. Despite two years at Arizona, all transfer students start over.

The next day I met some of my future classmates, but felt strange without knowing why. While talking with my parents, I realized that for the first time in my life I was a Jew out of place. Nobody I'd met was Jewish and some had never even met a Jew. I longed for connection; I needed my people.

Leave a task to a Jewish mother. Fifteen minutes later my mother called the West Point Jewish chaplain, Cantor

(Maj.) David Frommer, and five minutes later, he called me. I didn't know it at the time, but this exceptional human being would change my life. Chaplain Frommer talked about the Jewish community's energy and the weekly Shabbat services, Tuesday Torah studies, High Holy Day services, Birthright trips, Passover seders, Hillel club, and Jewish choir. We had everything, even a Jewish chapel which I visited the next day.

Continued on page 27

It was beautiful. Engraved on the wall outside were the words of Isaiah 32:17 “For the work of righteousness shall be peace,” a reminder of what we fight for. Chaplain Frommer welcomed me and gave me a tour. He showed me the wall with every known Jewish graduate’s name, the first being Simeon Magruder Levy in the first class of 1802. There is a memorial wall with every Jewish graduate killed in action, a Holocaust Torah, a Medal of Honor wall with every Jewish Medal of Honor recipient, a library, a kosher kitchen, and a spectacular sanctuary.

The Chapel is the legacy of Jewish grads who wanted the dedicated Jewish prayer space they never had. As cadets, they were forced to attend Christian services every Sunday and were tired of hauling their mobile ark to the fourth-floor chemistry laboratory on Shabbat. They started the West Point Jewish Chapel Fund which raised millions to build the chapel in 1984 and still supports Jewish life at the Academy today.

On Sunday our cadre called out worship options. When they called Jewish services, five of us stepped forward. Upon arriving at the chapel, we discovered something glorious: food. Chaplain Frommer yelled at us, but it was to make sure we took seconds ... A U.S. Army officer and former IDF infantryman, he was our leader. We loved him.

The next Sunday about 15 people came forward. I was surprised we had so many Jews in basic training. The third Sunday 50 people stepped forward, at which point I caught on. The Jewish Chapel was the only religious service serving food. Through that food we built a community that was Jewish but open to all. Many weren’t Jewish, but they loved the welcoming environment, and we loved having them.

Being Jewish at West Point is wonderful. We’re a small community, 136 of 4,400, but we’re responsible for representing our people. Many cadets never met a Jew before West Point; our job is to introduce ourselves, ensuring all cadets know that as future Army officers, we will have a Jewish soldier who, like all soldiers, is entitled to excellent leadership.

Simultaneously we have an unspoken duty to dispel notions within the Jewish community that Jews don’t serve. We do and we have since the beginning. Francis Salvador, a Sephardic Jew known as the “Paul Revere of the South,” was the first Jew elected to public office in the Colonies and the first Jew killed in the Revolutionary War. Simeon Magruder Levy, part of West Point’s first class, served in the Indian Wars. Benjamin B. Levy of the New York infantry earned the Medal of Honor in the Civil War. Hungarian-born Tibor “Ted” Rubin, survivor of Mauthausen concentration camp, emigrated to the United States and tried enlisting in the Army to repay his new country. He failed his English test and was barred, but eventually made it and fought in the Korean War. His commander, a ruthless antisemite, sent Rubin on the most dangerous missions but he always survived. Rubin single-handedly defended a hill from North Korean soldiers and spent 30 months in a brutal Chinese prisoner-of-war camp. His commanders rejected his Medal of Honor nomination because Rubin was a Jew, but 55 years later he received the medal from President George W. Bush. Did you know that 550,000 Jews served in the U.S. military in World War II or that Col. David “Mickey” Marcus (class of 1924), a distinguished American paratrooper, volunteered in the 1948 War of Independence, becoming Israel’s first general? He died in that war. Our history is glorious.

One name you’ll never hear is Moses Casper, my great-grandfather. He came from a shtetl in Poland, escaping pogroms. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in World War I, where he was a machine gunner in the 81st Infantry Division. Like Rubin, Moses endured horrible antisemitism in the Army, but he was determined to serve his new country. Moses fought through gas attacks and trench charges and was part of the largest operation in American military history, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. He once told my grandmother a war story where he saw his two best friends were dead. He always asked: “Why did I survive?” War is hell.

The next time you ask a Jewish servicemember, “What’s a nice Jewish boy or girl like you doing in the military?” just remember ... We’ve been fighting for this country since our Revolution, we belong here, and we will continue to serve.

I love being a Jew at West Point. I never expected I’d develop my identity deeper here than anywhere else. We proudly serve the people of the United States, and we have a duty to our community. So, the next time you ask a Jewish servicemember, “What’s a nice Jewish boy or girl like you doing in the military?” just remember ... We’ve been fighting for this country since our Revolution, we belong here, and we will continue to serve. Forever.

Am Yisrael Chai.

The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not reflect the position of the United States Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

Aidan D. Djavadi is a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



***MAZEL TOV TO THE
CLASS OF 2024 AND
THEIR FAMILIES!***