Our Jewish Veterans Remember World War II
Cover: Ira Weil Jeffery, killed at Pearl Harbor, was the first Jewish Minnesotan to die in World War II.

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Mission statement: The purpose of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest is to promote the vitality and continuity of Jewish culture in the Upper Midwest through preservation, interpretation, and education.

Established in 1984, the JHSUM works to fulfill its mission by developing archival collections and creating programs designed to share the unique stories of Jews in the Upper Midwest with broad audiences. A 501(c)(3) membership organization, it serves a community of scholars, educators, students, genealogists, family historians, and the general public through its primary-source archives, exhibitions, publications, and its Web site (www.jhsum.org).

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Several years ago, Linda Schloff, director of Collections, Exhibits, and Publications at the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest (JHSUM), realized there were some remarkable letters, photographs, and documents from World War II in the society’s archives. Her reading of two recent books, one by Deborah Dash Moore on Jewish veterans from the New York City area and the other by Thomas Saylor on Minnesotans’ recollections of the war, convinced Linda that there ought to be a collection focused on the stories of Jewish veterans from our region, including some who had not yet had the opportunity to record their memories. Thus she and her staff began the process of identifying and interviewing 25 World War II veterans of the Upper Midwest. In September 2006, Linda asked me to join the project, specifically, to design a format that combined these new oral histories with excerpts from several existing ones and integrated them with selections from the wealth of letters, journals, diaries, memoirs, and articles held in the JHSUM archives.

Living with these various stories as I worked to weave them into a coherent narrative gave me a new appreciation for the variety and power of individual experience. While accounts of great battles and treaties provide an essential overview of the history of World War II, only individual stories bring that history to life. And despite the flood of films and books that have created patriotic legends of the “good war” and the “greatest generation,” nothing brings home to us the extraordinary nature of wartime achievement and sacrifice more powerfully than the testimonies of our own neighbors, parents, and grandparents. So in these pages you will hear the voices of Jewish men and women, raised or settled in the Upper Midwest, who served in all branches of the armed forces and in all theaters of the conflict. As pilots, sailors, infantrymen, and medics—in combat, support, intelligence, and postwar occupation—they experienced the wider world, from the Quonset huts of England to the beaches of Normandy, from Dutch Guiana to the shores of the Philippines and New Caledonia.

Here are recorded the experiences of youth, usually 18 to 24; some are described when they occurred, and others are retold more than 60 years later. The oral history interviews were often difficult because the memories were disturbing and the chronologies blurred by time. But such lapses are most often eclipsed by sharply etched reports of events and characters. Often, interviewees could recount specific words spoken, sounds heard, equipment repaired, and the shape and feel of places occupied at moments of danger. Many recalled the challenges of leaving their Jewish homes, some for the very first time, to enter an unfamiliar world where they had little control over the details of daily life. Most spoke vividly about the characters with whom they labored and fought. In some cases, we were able to supplement their stories with contemporaneous letters, diary entries, and official documents. Such details move us behind the myths toward a greater understanding of what war means.
to the individual, especially as he or she experiences the cruel ironies of survival. Finally, there was the return to civilian life; as one veteran summed it up: “Taking off the uniform was the easy part. . . . Putting away what happened took a long time.”*

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with all those who took part in this project: Linda Schloff, who initiated it and oversaw every detail of the arduous process; the men and women who conducted the JHSUM oral history interviews; Linda’s very capable staff and freelance colleagues, who coordinated this issue of Upper Midwest Jewish History; and, most of all, the men and women who so generously shared their stories with us.

“How We Won the War” was the theme of the 1994 annual meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest, which featured a roundtable discussion by World War II veterans of both the Soviet and United States armed forces. The Russians spoke of the sacrifices they had made to save their motherland and proudly wore the large, colorful medals their country had bestowed upon them. While not discounting the rigors of war or their sense of patriotism, the Americans did not emphasize their service to country. Displaying characteristic Midwestern reticence, they spoke instead of doing their duty and then returning home to lives altered by government programs such as the GI Bill of Rights and aided by a booming economy. If there had been an exhibit on view that day, the Russian section would have consisted of medals and perhaps photographs of battles and postwar gulags, while college diplomas and pictures of newly constructed homes would have filled the American section.

We knew at the time that we had barely begun unearthing the stories of either the American or the Russian veterans, but we did not return to this project until 2006. Inspired by the Minnesota Historical Society’s multifaceted Greatest Generation project (2005–8), which explores the legacy of Minnesotans whose lives were shaped during the pivotal period encompassing the Great Depression, the war, and the postwar economic boom—and realizing that the ranks of Upper Midwestern military veterans were fast diminishing—we started our own war-related history project.

Two relevant books influenced our efforts. Thomas Saylor’s *Remembering the Good War: Minnesota’s Greatest Generation* (2005) reinforced my sense that GIs who came from the Upper Midwest shared certain characteristics, outlooks, and ways of coping. And *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (2004), by the noted historian Deborah Dash Moore, movingly describes the experiences of Jewish men from the enclaves of Brooklyn and the Bronx as they encountered a predominantly gentile world for the first time. Moore relates how they coped with anti-Semitism, learned to “subordinate their Jewishness,” and merged their American and Jewish identities. She concludes that military service transformed the feelings of these men about their rights as Americans and confirmed their belief in the need for a Jewish state. One veteran profiled by Moore did not come from the New York City area: Ira Koplow of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, maintained that growing up as a member of a distinct minority in an overwhelmingly Christian milieu tempered his sense of himself as a Jew.

Taking a cue from Moore, this issue of *Upper Midwest Jewish History* draws upon oral histories and numerous written materials, both published and unpublished, to focus on the experiences of Jewish GIs from our region. The backgrounds of these war veterans differed
from those of East Coast Jews in important ways. After all, they had come of age in a region where Jews never made up more than 2 percent of the population. Kassel Abelson, rabbi emeritus of Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park, calls the Minneapolis North Side of the 1950s “a nicer version of the Brooklyn” he knew growing up in the 1920s. Yet despite the high Jewish residential density and institutional richness of this ethnic neighborhood during the first half of the twentieth century, there were tensions along the borders and even inter-ethnic fights on Plymouth Avenue, the main thoroughfare, in the 1940s. The nicer version Abelson experienced was largely the result of Jews knowing their numbers were too few for them to engage in the kinds of verbal battles and organizational infighting that characterized vast Jewish communities like that of Brooklyn.

Upper Midwestern Jews, even those from the North Side of Minneapolis, learned early to “subordinate their Jewishness” in an effort to fit in. In fact, some, such as Sid Feldman and Harold Zats, assumed the nonconfrontational characteristics of their Scandinavian neighbors. Indeed, many often felt more comfortable around Midwestern gentiles than in the company of East Coast Jews, and some, such as Marv Jacobson, marveled that Jews in certain parts of the country would openly announce in newspaper ads that their stores would be closed for the High Holidays.

The Jews we interviewed for the oral history portion of our project came from a variety of backgrounds. Some grew up in strongly ethnic enclaves; others were isolated from fellow Jews, either because they lived in non-Jewish urban neighborhoods or because they came of age in small towns. Yet they all knew how to get along with gentiles, although they defended themselves if they met with anti-Semitism.

Upon entering the wartime military, Upper Midwestern Jews were particularly disturbed by three jarring dichotomies: the black-white divide they encountered in the South, the North-South rivalry that caused fights in basic training, and the disparity between the educated and the semi-literate or illiterate. Many commented on fellow soldiers, all Southerners, who could not see the point of completing even six years of public school. Despite their conflicting values, veterans of disparate backgrounds recognized that, in battle, reliance on the men in one’s unit was crucial—and bonding occurred that could last a lifetime. In fact, some of the most moving accounts we recorded are of the friendships forged with non-Jewish GIs and the subsequent loss of those comrades.

Needless to say, the Jewish GIs were grateful for hospitality they received in other Jewish communities. Although kashrut was not a major concern for most, many GIs attended religious services when they could, were sensitive to the presence of Jewish civilians and of synagogues, and steadfastly refused to remove their dog tags—stamped with the letter H (for “Hebrew”)—in situations where, if captured, they could have lost their lives.

Jewish servicemen, especially those who helped liberate concentration camps, were forced to consider the meaning of being a Jew. In at least one case, we found a correlation between a GI’s war experiences and his support for a Jewish state. Leon Frankel, a decorated Navy pilot, fought with the fledgling Israeli air force during the 1948 War of Independence because of what he had learned about the Holocaust.

As noted above, we drew upon several types of material to assemble this issue. Foremost among the primary sources were the 25 interviews we recorded in 2006 and 2007, chiefly with male World War II veterans, for the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest Veterans Oral History Project. Interviewers spent an hour or two with each participant, using a ques-
tionnaire devised by the JHSUM that incorporated questions formulated by the Minnesota Historical Society’s Greatest Generation team and then customized according to the specifically Jewish nature of the project.

Written materials—letters, journals, diaries, memoirs, and articles—comprised another invaluable source. Fortunately, the JHSUM archives contain a great deal of material pertaining to the war—just two examples being the journal Abe Sperling kept while supervising construction of portions of the Burma Road in 1944 and Jerry Weinberg’s diary, which he kept on a Teletype scroll that resembles a megillah. Precious letters from servicemen to family members back home revealed a great deal about the correspondents’ impressions and experiences; some families, such as the Eisenbergs and Riches, donated letters half a century after receiving them. Other written sources included here are portions of memoirs and reminiscences. Finally, we are grateful to those who have loaned us photographs, flight logs, and maps.

In quoting the oral histories, we have shortened some accounts by eliminating what might be called throat clearings, elided some repetitive and digressive remarks, and inserted bracketed parenthetical notes to clarify certain passages. To convey the immediacy and spontaneity of personal writing, we endeavored in most cases to reproduce diaries, journals, and letters as they were written, including abbreviations, some misspellings, and erratic syntax. Only when such irregularities made it difficult to follow a given written account, as in Dan Shinder’s May 1941 letter to his aunt, did we recast it. To differentiate oral histories and books from journals, diaries, and letters, we indicate the name of the speaker or writer, respectively, of the former sources, and we provide the date when written and the location, if known, for the manuscripts.

This issue of Upper Midwest Jewish History concludes with Voices, a section consisting of thumbnail sketches of those quoted veterans for whom we could find biographical information; and Sources, which contains a full listing of the published and unpublished materials we utilized.

The contents of this issue rely largely on the recollections of people relayed six decades after the fact. Recognizing the power of these narratives, I turned to someone who could, in effect, orchestrate the stories so that each one informed the next. Judy Brier, our guest editor, has a master’s degree in English, taught expository writing at the University of Minnesota for seven years, and led the St. Paul Jewish Community Center’s senior creative writing workshop for eleven years. She and I selected the material together, but Judy took the lead in developing an outline and arranging the transcribed oral histories and the written contributions. We think readers will agree that she has done a masterful job of creating a collage of experiences that constitute a powerful narrative about World War II military service from an Upper Midwestern Jewish perspective. The JHSUM is grateful for her enthusiasm, skill, and sensitivity.

We are confident that we have accomplished something valuable in this issue by recording and organizing the stories of Upper Midwestern Jewish veterans of World War II. But by no means have we been able to gather and include here all the materials from our region that are relevant to the period.

Originally, we hoped to tell more stories of women veterans. In fact, Molly Ehrlich Tyler collected information on more than a hundred Jewish women this region who served in the armed forces. Unfortunately, however, telling details of their experiences were scanty, and while their contributions were important, descriptions of them paled in comparison to dra-
matic tales of wartime experiences. We know, of course, that leaving the shelter of home, moving far away, and interacting with hundreds of other independent women made for a liberating adventure, but it was difficult to find emblematic stories that vividly captured their impressions.

Similarly, we were unsuccessful in finding Jews who had worked as civilians in war-related industries. Ruth Brin’s account of her job at the War Production Board in Washington, D.C., in her book *Bittersweet Berries: Growing up Jewish in Minnesota* (1999) was the sole exception. But because of the paucity of such accounts, we reluctantly decided to forego this planned section.

We continue to pursue first-person narratives about World War II. With financial support from the United Jewish Fund and Council and the Minnesota Historical Society, we are currently interviewing Jewish individuals who served in the Soviet armed forces.

We could not have completed this project without the aid of the following volunteers, who conducted oral history interviews: Jan Godes, Will Hegeman, Susan Hoffman, Shayne Karasov, Faye Kaye, Audra Keller, Dr. Brian Krasnow, Mimi Nachman, Laura Savin, Dianne Siegel, and Marcia Weisman. Our thanks also go to volunteer Margie Fink for proofing through scanned letters converted to Microsoft Word and to board member and volunteer Carol Gurstelle for sifting through hundreds of pages of letters to and from servicemen.

I want to express my appreciation to the jhsum staff as well. Susan Hoffman, my colleague at *Upper Midwest Jewish History*, trained the volunteers in oral history techniques and conducted several interviews herself. Julie Tarshish scanned masses of material and kept track of all the loaned photographs. And intern Sarah Sadrakula found public-domain photographs to supplement ones we had already collected, organized all the images we used, and capably checked editorial queries.

Finally, I’m grateful to my dear colleagues Phil Freshman for his careful editing and Judy Gilats for her beautiful design and typesetting.

The material in this issue of *Upper Midwest Jewish History* reinforces the premise that regional differences *do* matter. People are shaped not only by their religion and ethnicity but also by where they grew up. The military experiences of Upper Midwestern Jews as recounted here show that their encounters with a wide cross section of soldiers from all over America did not cause them to subordinate their Jewishness as did those GIs described by Deborah Dash Moore. Coming of age in the nation’s heartland before the war, they already had done so, and the postwar American Jewish community they helped create continued to be influenced by its Midwestern setting.
In the cities—being part of the tribe or living apart

SHERMAN RICHTER  Oh, a great neighborhood. . . . Mostly Jewish people living in North Minneapolis in the 1920s, the ’30s, and the ’40s. That was my whole childhood. . . . I was a student at North High in 1943 when they had a patriotic program. Some Marines all dressed up came to school and sort of gave me a boost to join the United States Marine Corps.

JERRY SINYKIN  [My father] . . . went into the cosmetic business . . . on University Avenue . . . right between [Minneapolis and St. Paul]. . . . It was a very successful venture, until the Depression.

He [also] had a hobby . . . a farm out on Wayzata Boulevard [west of Minneapolis]. . . . He raised German shepherd dogs. He brought the first guide dogs to the United States [, and] he also brought over a German trainer, who had been training guide dogs in Switzerland. [G]radually . . . the kennels and the dogs became his life. His organization was called His Master’s Eyes. I think he stole it from the RCA [trademark logo]. . . . [For a while, I lived] out at the dog kennels, . . . and I went to West High School in Minneapolis. We still commuted [from Wayzata]. It was a long way.

HAROLD ARENSON  I’m a lifelong St. Paulite. We lived in [the] Selby-Dale [neighborhood], where my father picked up and delivered cleaning and laundry. I went to Webster and Irvine grade schools and Marshall Junior High. When Marshall converted to a senior high, I was a member of its first graduating class. After school I helped my dad with deliveries and spent many hours with friends at the Jewish Community Center at Holly and Grotto. I even remember the day [in August 1934] I was picking up laundry on University and Rice Street when the St. Paul police machine-gunned Homer Van Meter, John Dillinger’s bank-robbing partner [nearby]!

RHODA DONESHEFSKY  The lower West Side [of St. Paul was known] as the Flats. [It] had four synagogues, the West Side Talmud Torah [with] a social hall and sleeping quarters for people who had no place to stay, [as well as] grocery stores, three kosher butcher shops, three bakeries, four fresh fish shops, and four places to slaughter chickens. We had a Rabbi Simon, who gave us answers to our problems [and] a ritual bathhouse on Filmore Street. All the businesses closed midday on Friday in preparation for the Sabbath.

Above: Plymouth Avenue on Minneapolis’s North Side, 1930s
SID FELDMAN  My father was very, very religious. We weren’t even allowed to turn the lights off on a Friday night. We used to have to go get a gentile to come in and flip the switch, you know. So when it used to be 20, 30 below zero, my parents used to go to bed early, and I would stay up and read or listen to the radio. He’d say, “Shmie” [Shmiel]—that was my Jewish name—“go get someone to turn the lights off.” It was, like, 30 below zero, and I’m not going to go out. So I says, “Okay, Pa,” and I’d open the door and shut the door, and then I’d use my dog to flip the switch.”

ELLIOTT KARASOV  My father had been a featherweight prizefighter in Canada. He moved our family down to St. Paul, where my mother had family. One of my earliest St. Paul memories, when I was about four, is of having to live in a tent because the mortgage company foreclosed on our house. We stayed in a tent with a wooden floor near Lake McCarron [off Rice Street] for the whole summer, until my father was able to rent a duplex on Iglehart [Avenue]. Our family could not afford to join a synagogue, but we attended High Holiday services at the Jewish Community Center on Holly and Grotto.

HAROLD ZATS  We lived in a small home in the Midway district of St. Paul. It was just very difficult to even have any money at all. I don’t know how they even existed, although we, as kids 10, 11, 12 years of age, were all working, trying to help out. . . . Our neighborhood was 99 percent Catholic. We were the only Jewish family in this area and got along very, very well . . . with the neighbors. However, I don’t think the children knew what a Jewish person was at that time. So I had no problems at all about any anti-Semitism due to that. I’m talking between 1930 and 1935. I played all the sports and had a good relationship with everybody, as did my parents.

LEONARD PARKER  My grandfather was very Orthodox. My grandma died, and my grandpa lived with us for many years. He’d wake me up every morning to lay tefillin [placing phylacteries on the head, left forearm, and left hand for the reciting of weekday morning prayers]. . . . I was a boy cantor. From the time I was nine years old, I would conduct services on Friday night and Saturday morning [for Temple Israel in Milwaukee. It was an Orthodox synagogue].
In the small towns

LIONEL GREENBERG  I was born in Grafton, North Dakota . . . [where] I went through high school. I was valedictorian [, and] we were the only permanent Jewish family in Grafton . . . . We went to shul, generally, in Grand Forks for the High Holidays . . . . I started [at the University of Minnesota] in 1939. They sent me here to find a Jewish girl to marry. There weren’t enough of them in Grand Forks.

KENNETH BENDER  I grew up hearing my hometown Eureka [, South Dakota,] was the Wheat Capital of the world in 1892 . . . . There were 28 crop elevators in the town. By 1916, when I was born, the town no longer held that distinction, but it still boasted a population of approximately 1200 people . . . .

As the second of five children, with Grandma Becky living in the house . . . it was crowded, but no one noticed. . . . [She] taught me to put on tefillin . . . while saying my morning prayers . . . before going to school. . . .

Being the only Jewish family in Eureka didn’t bother [us]. One of my sisters, Saralee, when she was six, used to sing in school, “Onward Jewish Soldiers.” . . . What separated me from the other children more than being Jewish was that my parents were not German. Eureka was made up almost entirely of German immigrants—German was the first language in many of their homes.

Jewish High Holidays were something we looked forward to. On the way to Ashley, North Dakota, for services, my dad would tell us children how fortunate we were to be able to pray in Hebrew in a public place without fear. . . . My folks were well liked and my father served on the school board, was an alderman and also was Mayor of Eureka.

In Europe

WALTER SCHWARZ  After finishing high school, I was attending a textile school in Brno, Czechoslovakia, when the Nazis marched in. [It] was a Tuesday morning, and I went to school as if nothing had happened, you know. I went up the steps to the main entrance, and I saw a bunch of hoodlums with the swastikas. They said, “Juden, raus!” [Jews, get out!”] . . . In that school . . . there were three groups: There were the Germans—those were real Nazis—and the Czechs and the Jews . . . . On the day that [the Germans] chased us out of the school, a group of Jewish students met in the park next to the school and decided what we were going to do. Now, one of our leaders was Henry Newman. . . . We followed him because he was the oldest one with some experience. . . . [H]e came from [Breslau,] Germany, . . . and his parents had been deported. This was the first time we knew that people got deported. This was in 1939. There was no talk about Holocaust yet, but there was suppression. He advised us, “Get out of the country . . . as fast as you can.” . . . I said, “My parents live in Romania. I’m going to hop on the train and go home.”

Left: Grain elevators, Grano, North Dakota, c. 1915
1. December 7, 1941

**Leon Frankel**  As you know, it was a Sunday morning. And . . . a friend of mine by the name of Sonny Zuckerman, our ritual was to go to the pool hall on Sunday morning, known as Bilbo’s in St. Paul. . . . It was like a famous hangout for everybody. Of course, we were at the pool hall when the news came over the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. I remember Sonny and I both looking at each other, and of course, the draft was on prior to this. A lot of our friends and people we knew had gone into the army . . . with more or less the same thoughts, being of eligible age, sooner or later we’re going to wind up somewhere in the military. . . . It was quite a shocker—quite a shocker. Most people had never heard of Pearl Harbor. Didn’t know where it was. Slowly but surely, we started hearing the news of what took place and it sounded pretty devastating . . . just didn’t know what to make of it. . . . We knew that there were all kinds of negotiations going on. Japanese envoys were in Washington. . . . War seemed like such a far off—it was going on in Europe, of course. Places in Asia. But we never thought we’d ever be affected by it.

**Joe Brochin**  I was helping in my dad’s store on Plymouth and Newton. . . . We had a radio going there all the time. . . . Then, of course, Roosevelt came on the radio, and I think Churchill came on. It looked like we were going to have a full-time ally, which we needed in the worst way.

**Mark Hertz**  I remember taking the streetcar from the university to have Sunday dinner at the home of my cousin Melvin Hertz. I got off the streetcar and was walking to their house, and someone came out from their porch and told me about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Then I went in to Melvin’s house and we all listened to the radio broadcast about war.

**Bernie Weitzman**  I was working at the New Brighton Ammunition Center. They were building that facility to make 50-caliber bullets for the service. I was working with the Caterpillar and drag units there [when we got the news].

*Some were away from home when the war broke out*

**Rosalind Rush Simon**  The morning of Pearl Harbor, the phone rang [at our home on Oahu]. My husband [Lieutenant Lincoln Simon] answered, and he said, “I have to go to headquarters.” He didn’t tell me that some woman had said the Japanese had bombed Pearl
Harbor, because he didn’t believe it. . . . I got dressed and went downstairs. There was no paper, which was very unusual. I could see through the gap in the hills the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but I thought it was maneuvers. They were always having maneuvers.

Then a soldier drove up in his jeep. . . . “Mrs. Simon, the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor. You are to prepare to be evacuated.” So I went to my kitchen door . . . and my Chinese maid was in the kitchen. I said, “The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor, and we have to prepare to be evacuated.” She said, “Would you mind going around to the front door? I just mopped the kitchen floor.”

. . . Then it registered what I had said. We got ready, and we were evacuated to Diamond Head, where they had an ammunitions-storage [tunnel].

. . . The first night we heard rumors that the water supply had been poisoned, that parachutists had landed on the island, taken over the island.

Of course, we didn’t sleep. I had a one-year-old child. . . . [The next morning,] some of us went to the entrance of the tunnel, and we saw the United States Dawn Patrol. That was the most beautiful sight, because the Dawn Patrol meant that the island was still in the control of the Americans.

KENNETH BENDER  Shortly after arriving at Fort Sam Houston [in San Antonio] on a Sunday [as a second lieutenant], I was . . . playing golf with a fellow graduate of ocs [Officer Candidate School]. . . . After a few holes, a loud siren went off at the golf course . . . and I asked a man running by what had happened. “Haven’t you heard? The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor!” From the golf course we could see people running and saw lots of activity. “What do you think?” I asked Otho. . . . “I think it’s going to be a long time before we get to golf again,” he said, “so let’s finish playing.” I hesitated, then said, “Let’s do it.”. . . [B]ut even the good shots didn’t feel right. The clink of my last club into the bag started a new chapter in my life.

LLOYD HOLLANDER diary, Dec. 7. Japan declared war on us. Things look bad. I don’t think I’ll get to see Claire for some time. I sure miss her. I didn’t know I could get so fond of anyone.

Lloyd’s letters to his family, Dec. 9. Things are really popping out here in California. We had blackouts in Frisco and Oakland and the base is kept in total darkness. Dec. 25. Those subs are sure keeping us busy. [He served as a Coast Guard radar man.] We have picked up survivors from a lot of them.
2.  Joining the Military

DAN SHINDER letter to his Aunt Malka, May 18, 1941. I’ll say to you, as I said to Mother almost two years ago, I saw what was coming, and reasoned that the best thing I could do was join of my own volition, and see how far up I could go. I was right, then. Perhaps I am right, now, too, for I see a great work ahead of us.

HY SCHANFIELD (as told by his daughter, Sandy Teichner, and son, Paul Schanfield) [Our father] wasn’t doing all that well in business [in Minneapolis]. He went to his uncle, who was sheriff of the county. The guy said he’d be better off in the Army. . . . [Then Dad] got stuck in a blizzard, and the car got stuck. He said, “The heck with this. I’m going to reenlist in the Army and go someplace warm.” In 1940 he knew there would be a war in Europe and Africa, so he went as far away [from those places] as he could—he went to the Philippines!

KENNETH BENDER Even in South Dakota, I was well aware of the political turmoil in the world. I believed that there would soon be a draft law [and] did not want to be drafted. I wanted to represent my country voluntarily. Though I had graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School and was practicing law in Rapid City in November 1940, in Eureka, South Dakota, I made the personal decision to volunteer as a private. I was the first Army volunteer from McPherson County. With war looming in the background and being a member of a very patriotic family, it was my belief that it was my duty as an American to offer my services to my country. I boarded a train . . . to Fort Snelling on November 26.

MARV JACOBSON I was 17 and gung-ho. I wanted to join the armed forces. I just felt a nationalistic spirit and probably an anti-Nazi feeling. Plus the fact that the guys I hung around with, played ball with, were one, two, even three years older than I was . . . and they were all either in or getting ready to go in . . . so I just wanted to join. . . . My family did not try to dissuade me. They just accepted it. . . . We had been attacked by Japan, and now the anti-German feeling grew. . . . It was almost [a foregone conclusion] that you should go.

HAROLD SPECKTOR I graduated [from Humboldt High School, on St. Paul’s West Side] in 1941. . . . In 1942 five of us climbed into this one guy’s car and we went to Sausalito, California, and worked in the shipyards for about six months. One of the fellows I was with decided he wanted to go home . . . so we turned around and came home. That was about October or November of 1942. I tried to get a job. In March I went up to the draft board and said, “Take me. Nobody will hire me.”
MADALYN GOTTlieB BRAUFMAN  I enlisted [in the waves] because the war was critical, and I felt I could be of some help and let some man . . . go into active duty. My brother was already in the Navy . . . . My mother was not too thrilled about my enlisting, but my father had served in the First World War, and he was more [agreeable about] it. My friends were all very excited that I was doing something like that . . . . I had been working for the Minnesota health department, and I gave them notice . . . that I had enlisted. They were very pleased about it . . . . I was twenty-one.

LILLIAN BRAEMAN BELL  [I] joined the waves in late 1942 . . . . [I]t was a very popular war, and there was the Nazi problem, and parts of [my parents’] family were disappearing, so it was considered the right thing to do . . . . [My] older brother was . . . . in the army air force [sic]. And my younger brother was [in] the artillery . . . . I felt I should participate.

This was regular navy, [but] they didn’t have women on board the ships except for the hospital ships, and I didn’t think that they would put me on a hospital ship. Actually, they came around recruiting especially for medical technologists, which is why I joined. I found out that they were building a new dispensary at a Naval Air Station in Atlanta, and they needed someone to start up the lab . . . . [T]hat’s what they were sending me out to do.

HAROLD ZATS  At 18 I was drafted. Oddly enough, when you were drafted they made you do a résumé at Fort Snelling, and due to my being a . . . professional musician, they shipped me out to [be a drummer in a] band at a basic flying school in Malden, Missouri.

ARNOLD FRISHBERG  I enlisted in the Navy in 1941 . . . . They gave me my second choice—it was called pharmacist’s mate . . . . I was sent to Great Lakes Naval Hospital to be trained [and then] assigned to the uss Cahaba, which was an oil tanker . . . . We went to Pearl Harbor [for] a shakedown cruise.

LARRY SCHLASINGER letter to his father, undated . . . . like you, Dad, to have to fight as a boy for my home and even for my life, against the authorities of a supposedly civilized country; to know the feel of Cossacks’ whips and to be trampled by their horses in the street whenever they feel the urge to beat someone; finally, when barely 20, to have to seek peace and a decent life in a foreign land. Or like you, Mom—to live in the same fear; as a small child, to see my playmates thrown from second-story windows, their mothers and fathers butchered like so many pigs. To see my older brother, who had served his country in war, crawl home with his back smashed in by rifle butts for defending a bearded Jewish fruit peddler from being beaten in the market.
You saw these things; I didn’t. For that fact alone I would have an infinite debt far more than the worth of my life or any service I could perform in giving it to my country . . . and, of course, to you for coming to it.

*For some, joining up was complicated*

**JOE GARELICK** When I graduated from Humboldt High School [, on St. Paul’s West Side,] . . . I enlisted in the Navy . . . I went to St. Olaf [College] in Northfield to become an aviator . . . I had an accident and was in the hospital, and when I got out, my class was gone . . . . They sent me to Great Lakes Naval Training Center [—they wanted to put me in submarines—] and that’s when I found out I could get out of the Navy. I wanted to fly . . . I reenlisted at Fort Snelling in the Army Air [Corps and] . . . went to Las Vegas, Nevada, gunnery school.

**JERRY SINYKIN** I graduated West High School [in Minneapolis] in 1943. I went down to enlist in the Navy Air Corps and was turned down because I was color-blind. In July, a month after I graduated, I was inducted into the Army.

**JERRY WEINBERG** I was rejected the first time [I tried to enlist] . . . because I have only one good eye. So I stayed home for a while and went to Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis. I studied . . . typewriters and teletypes. Then I memorized the [eye] chart . . . so when I got [to the Army recruiting center,] I knew the chart completely and they accepted me. I never told my parents about that.

**LEONARD PARKER** I was classified as 1-A in 1942, at 19, but I hadn’t been called up yet. Different people were either enlisting or getting drafted, and I thought it would be an adventure. I never thought I’d be in the infantry. I was too smart to be in the infantry, you know. It was my second semester at the University of Wisconsin.

I spent nine months at the U of M in an ASTP [Army Special Training Program], in a civil engineering course. [Then] they started having all kinds of casualties, and they needed reinforcements. So they folded the program and sent us all off . . . I ended up going to Kansas in the infantry.

**LIONEL GREENBERG** I took training [in Washington, D.C..] as a fingerprint searcher . . . and I didn’t like the attitude in the place . . . . You could just tell that some of the guys were there for the draft exemption . . . . I figured that, son-of-a-gun, somebody’s got to be in the military. . . . So I says, “Here’s one week’s notice. I’m quitting to enlist.”

In Washington I tried to enlist in the Navy Air Corps, but they wouldn’t accept me. I went back to Grafton, North Dakota, then came to Minneapolis and took the test for the Army Air Corps and was accepted. Everybody had to go before a committee . . . . I says, “I’d like to be a pilot if you’ll guarantee me fighter planes. I don’t want anyone else to depend on my eyes.” (I wore glasses.) They said, “We can’t guarantee you anything.” I said, “I’ll take navigator.”
JOE BROCHIN  I gave up a deferment because I had been [told] . . . “We need pharmacists. We’ll put you to work in the field you’re doing in civilian life.” Well, that sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? . . . I enlisted at Fort Snelling and was put in the Navy. Holy cow! . . . They promised me I’d be working in the Army with either hospital or pharmacy [duties]. . . . I had a school chum who had a brother-in-law in the [Army Reserve]. . . . He pulled some strings and got me back into the Army. I was twenty-four.

LEON FRANKEL  I heard all these stories about trench warfare. After all, I was born just five years after the end of World War I. I said, “There’s no way Leon is going to fight World War II in the trenches.” I’d always been fascinated with aviation. . . . I had a draft card already, 1-A and the whole bit. I said, “I’m not waiting for the draft. I’m going to enlist in the Army Air Corps, if they’ll take me.”

So this was about in July or August of 1942. In order for me to get to Minneapolis, I had to take a streetcar from St. Paul. I got kind of dressed up and went to my usual spot, the pool hall on 5th and Minnesota . . . and I bumped into a buddy of mine by the name of Red Fogarty. . . . He had never seen me dressed up. “Where you going?” “I’m on my way to enlist in the Army Air Corps.” So he says, “Oh, you got to be out of your mind! Why don’t you join the Navy Air Corps?” I said, “Well, gee, I never thought about the Navy. But don’t you have to be a college graduate and meet all these . . . ?” “No,” he says, “they’ve lowered the standards. If you’re a high school graduate and can produce three letters of recommendation from prominent citizens and you pass the physical and other exams . . . the Navy is the greatest,” and he pulled out a card . . . showing me he had enlisted in the V-5 Program. . . . That moment in time I changed from Army to Navy Air Corps. . . . [W]e have an expression in Yiddish, beschert—it was fated to be.

MERLE HILLIARD  Early in 1942, while a student at the U of M, I received a letter from my mother in Minot. She wrote that she had read in the newspaper that President Roosevelt’s son was at the Harvard Business School and when he finishes he will receive a commission in the Navy. With the chutzpah of a Jewish mother she said, “If it’s good enough for FDR’s son, it’s good enough for you! Go to Harvard.” Those were the days when we did what our parents said.

So I applied and fortunately, the Admissions Office had a big map with an empty space labeled North Dakota. Since I was geographically desirable, they put a black-headed pin in the state and I was admitted for the June 1942 class.
On September 19th, 1942, I received my Ensign commission in the Supply Corps just like my mother promised. That included staying in school until May of 1943. Courses included . . . “Production for War Industries,” “Financing War Industries,” and “Accounting for War Industries.”

Then, back to Minot to await orders. I was sent to the only naval station in North Dakota, a state where the largest bodies of water were large puddles after a rainstorm.

Inductees on their way to Fort Snelling, c. 1942
3. Military Training

KENNETH BENDER  [M]any of our uniforms were World War I vintage [, and] the rifles assigned to us were 1903 Springfields, bolt action, used during wwi. The leather shoes were six inches high, going above the ankle. We also wore the leggings that tightened on the side. . . . We had orders not to wear the uniforms when leaving the post because of a negative appearance. . . . Our training consisted of . . . classes in military courtesy, close and extended order drill, long marches, bayonet training, plus learning about military tactics. . . . After four and a half months at Fort Snelling, I was promoted to sergeant, three stripes. . . . [Later] I was one of two soldiers from Company E of the 3rd Infantry selected to attend [officer candidate school] at Fort Benning, Georgia. . . . Of our class . . . 25 percent [washed out]. I was one of the fortunate ones . . . and became a 2nd Lieutenant . . . in a class called the 90 Day Wonders because we were trained in [just] 90 days. I was commissioned on November 6, 1941.

JULES LEVIN  “Good afternoon. Here’s the latest news.” Several times a week the newscasts are supplemented by lectures and movies on the “why” of it all. Why we are at war. Why we are doing what we’re doing. Why we are going to win. In the afternoon we continue to learn and practice how to become a good soldier. Discipline is very important. A soldier must learn to react instantly. In combat there is no time to question a command.

Some of the more challenging feats we had to perform included: A 25-mile hike in the mountains, with our ever-present backpack attached to our shoulders; a five-mile walk/run, again with the omnipresent pack on our backs, to be completed in no more than an hour. At the conclusion of this test the younger fellows, like myself, felt very proud. We quickly showered, had dinner and were off to the Service Center or to a movie. The “old” guys, the over 30 bunch, mostly collapsed on their cots.

A frightening challenge was the high jump into the Pacific. Swimmers and non-swimmers, including non-coms and officers, were required to walk to the end of a 30-foot-high pier above the ocean. We wore life jackets and all of our clothes, except for shoes. We were told that just before we jumped we were to squeeze our nose with the thumb and forefinger of one hand, and hold on to our “privates” with the other. It was lucky that the non-com issuing the order didn’t give the order backwards. . . .

Our most harrowing test was completing the Infiltration Course. The idea was to advance on enemy positions under enemy fire. This was the toughest test of all. It involved running, climbing and finally crawling through a simulated mine field. We had to accomplish this wearing full combat attire, with a pack on our backs and a cartridge belt buckled around our waists, and carrying a rifle with the bayonet attached. The last part of this test was the most
dangerous. To make sure we kept our heads and other extremities close to the ground, a brace of machine guns sprayed live bullets over the course, waist high!

**SID FELDMAN** I took my basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, . . . as a wheeled-vehicle mechanic. . . . I became a sergeant, and I had a track with a bunch of tools. . . . We used to fix vehicles as they were being moved.

There were mostly gentiles. We lived in a barracks [with] 60 men, 30 on a floor. I was six foot three and weighed 220, so I wasn’t a little Jewish guy they all picked on. . . . I had a couple of friends. One was from Philadelphia. His name was Ray. He was one of the little guys that everybody picked on. . . . I was like the protector of this Ray. There was a couple [Jewish] kids from Brooklyn, but they weren’t our type of people. You know, they were loud like a New Yorker. . . . Midwesterners were just quiet. They were pretty arrogant guys. They knew it all. Nobody messed with them. There’s always a smart-ass. . . . One kid, he always pulled a knife on people. So the sergeant says, “Why don’t you take the guy out for a walk?” So three or four guys . . . took him out into the woods and beat the hell out of him. He came back all broken up . . . the sergeant just didn’t notice anything wrong with him because the kid deserved it—he was a troublemaker for everybody. You know, he was a bully and probably scared to death.

[Eating non-kosher food] didn’t bother me at all. [But] one time my girlfriend . . . came to visit us at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and . . . she was invited to eat with the officers’ mess. I happened to be on KP [kitchen patrol] that day. They served ham with raisins. . . . She looked at it, and she says, “What is this?” I says, “That’s ham with raisins.” She said, “I’m not going to eat that.” I says, “Try. Do something. You’re sitting with the officers.” Anyway, she didn’t eat it. She got by, you know. She was just a 20-year-old girl. . . . The fact is, when you’re brought up in a real Orthodox home, the first chance you get, you go try . . . a pork chop.

**ART EISENBERG** letter to his father, June 20, 1945. Dad, please believe me when I tell you that I’m having the time of my life—I’ve met more damn women than I admit I ever knew existed—and I’m having a hell of a swell time. . . . When on liberty and I have a date—which is often the case—I’ll do as I please—come in all hours of the nite—nobody says a word about it. Yes—when I come home for a few days and go out with someone I’m very fond of on my last nite, I’m told to be in at 1:30—and Aunt Claire did not make things any easier by saying that any girl that stays out until five and six certainly doesn’t talk and neck all that time—I’ve been around enuff to see that most everybody indulges in intercourse quite fully—why Phil says that he can have any girl he wants for a 5 cent candy bar. . . . [J]ust what the hell kind of a world is this?—or is it because I haven’t grown up yet?
July 12, 1944

Mrs. F. Eisenberg
1714 8th Ave. N.
Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Mrs. Eisenberg:

It was my happy pleasure to meet your son Arthur at our Sabbath services held last Friday night here at Farragut.

From his appearance it is evident that life in the Navy is agreeing with him for he looks quite well and happy.

I know that you will be glad to hear about him and that he is interested in Jewish services which we conduct on the station every Friday evening. If I can be of any service to you in his behalf, please do not hesitate to write.

Cordially,

Rabbi Shulman

ALBERT M. SHULMAN
Chaplain, USNR
MARV JACOBSON  I was in the Navy . . . and stationed at Ward Island, outside of Corpus Christi, Texas. During the High Holidays, I would read the newspaper, and a number of the stores would advertise, “We will be closed because of the Jewish holiday.” These were not kosher butcher shops but a jewelry store and a department store. I had never seen that before . . . there in Corpus Christi, Texas, which you wouldn’t expect if you were Jewish—you’d just want to tone it down. You wouldn’t want people to know. That struck me as really wonderful that people would come right out and say [that.]

[I had] more experiences with anti-negro [behavior] . . . than any anti-Semitism. There were a lot of guys from the South, and they were really, many of them, strongly anti-negro. . . . I’m saying “negro,” but they would use the other word. They just could not see associating with or being in the same barracks with them. . . . When we were traveling to Corpus Christi and even down in Oklahoma . . . the “For Negroes Only” restaurants, drinking fountains, and buses made more of an impact on me than any anti-Semitism.

JOE BROCHIN  We were [at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois,] for 13 weeks, and I get called in. . . . “We want you to go to Gardner General Hospital in Chicago.” I take the physical exam for ocs [Officer Candidate School] . . . [and] the doctor said I was top-notch. . . . “But you’ve got a 2400 eye, and you can’t even get in the Army, let alone ocs. I’d like to catch the sob who passed you for physically fit into the Army.” When I went to town in Rockford one time, I was introduced to . . . a big moose of a guy from Tennessee, fairly primitive. He asked me if I’d do him a favor, if I’d have my wife read a letter from his girlfriend. . . . The Army took him and several others of my unit who could not read or write.

There was another fellow that took training with me. He was a loner, very much alone. . . . I got to talking, “Hey, what did you do in civilian life?” “Oh, you wouldn’t like it.” I says, “Listen, you can tell me anything. My lips are sealed.” He says, “I work for the Mafia in nyc.” I says, “The Mafia? Don’t tell me it was heavy duty?” “Yes, I was a hit man.” How about that!

LARRY SCHLASINGER letter to his sister Flo, January 3, 1944
Ma chérie Héloïse,
Time at last to write—an evening all to our little lonesomes is a rare delight around here. Add a good radio concert and the prospect of some sleep and already you have contentment. There’s the usual lack of news. We had a comparatively easy day today, and not a thing to trouble us tonight. After which our faces should be bright and shining in the moonlight for reveille.

Your tales of the kids regale me continually. The news about S_____ was quite a surprise. The army could do him a lot of good if he’d let it,
but unless I miss my guess I hope for his sake they stick him straight in some clerical job or the judge-advocates. Otherwise, a guy like him is up against sheer hell—a fact which of course I don’t advise you to tell anyone directly concerned. If he gets basic training anywhere in the Ground Forces, especially infantry or artillery, he’s going to have to get over a lot of notions. You can’t pick your associates—they vary from near-morons to professional crooks to jitterbugs and political idealists—and you get along with all of them, or else. Actually, of course, it’s the easiest society in the world to get along with because it’s the most fraternal and the most broad-minded. But the guy who brings any social or educational class notions with him asks for trouble, and everyone else—including the ones he may consider his natural support—is only too glad to give it to him. You can’t dodge bullets alongside a man and then pull a down-the-nose sneer on his language or manners or morals. I’ve seen a few Harvard and Yale specimens try it, and it doesn’t go far. . . . On the other hand, if he can get the spirit of the thing, he could stand to see a cross-section close-up that couldn’t be found in a lifetime, and before he knows it he’ll have an amazing assortment of pretty good friends. The army doesn’t concern itself with formal morés or education, just with wits, heart and guts. It expects them and admires them, and the combination works very well for all concerned.

But I didn’t mean to go on like this. Please excuse the vehemence. We have a couple of prize specimens in this barracks (not playboys, just a couple of overweight snobs), which causes a certain touchiness in all of us on the subject. . . .

Hope to get that furlough come spring. . . . Keep your fingers crossed.

Gotta go now. . . . Write soon.

Love, Abèlard [Larry]

SHERMAN RICHTER When I was in boot camp [in San Diego] . . . I was 18 or 19. . . . [I was] sort of a gung-ho kid. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have joined the Marine Corps. Boot camp was led by two drill instructors . . . [who] had been in China. We went through tremendously heated marches and drills . . . By the way, Tyrone Power was in my platoon. His
Army air base seder, April 19, 1943, prepared by Jewish women of Sioux Falls, South Dakota
wife, Anabella, used to come and pick him up. He was the only guy that ever got out of boot camp!

Like I say, in boot camp we had Texas vs. Minnesota. There was name-calling back and forth, but eventually, when it got down to knowing we were going to do our part for the United States, we all calmed down . . . [Camp] food wasn’t a problem for me. As a youth, I ran around with my friends in North Minneapolis, and we would go to different restaurants and eat when I was in high school. I was used to eating outside of the house. I did have one or two skirmishes [because I was Jewish]. Well, I sort of scared this one guy. I took the powder out of a hand grenade, and I threw [it] at him, and [after that] I don’t think . . . he ever mentioned the Jews.

**MRS. MILTON (FRANCES) SADOWSKY** It was the Sioux Falls air base . . . and before we knew it there were more soldiers at this air base than the population of Sioux Falls itself. [My father] ate at the restaurant called the Chocolate Shop, and he was very, very friendly with the three Greek men who ran this establishment. And he used to sit at a certain booth every day and he had instructed the owners that if any soldier entered that they were to be his guests for lunch. And then he would come home every evening and regale us with stories of these various soldiers. And many of the Jewish ones, of course, we met in the synagogue, and their pronunciation was letter perfect and it made the rituals all the more enjoyable for my father, mother, and myself. . . .

I will never forget one Passover . . . all the Jewish women cooked food and we helped serve. . . . [O]ne of the soldiers we knew, he was from Brooklyn, when he asked my mother for seltzer water, she said, “Wake up son, you’re not in Brooklyn!” And many of their wives were here too. We tried our very best to get housing for them. And we had open house for them. Many times we would come home from father’s shop and find them sitting on our front porch. We had a swing. And they would be there and whatever we had to eat we shared with them.

**TED PAPERMASTER** It was Pesach, and the wonderful Jewish community of [New Brunswick, New Jersey] put on a Seder for all the Jewish service personnel of Camp Kilmer. Several hundred attended. When I and my friends arrived at the dining hall, the man at the door could see that we were officers and told us that we should be seated with other officers. You know, this is the army. Well, the other officers turned out to be nurses. During the festivities, I tried to open a conversation with the lady lieutenant across the table. “I’m a Litvak,” I began, “What are you?” “I’m a shiksa,” she replied. My natural rejoinder [was], “What are you doing here?” Well, her husband was Jewish and so she felt eligible to be at the Seder.

**LEONARD PARKER** I ended up going to Camp Phillips, Kansas, in the infantry. Almost every Saturday night, I’d have a fight. A lot of [the guys] . . . would make remarks like, “We wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for the goddam Jews.” You know, [they would say] this kind of stuff because the concentration camp thing had been exposed. So this guy Joe . . . nice enough when he was sober, [but] when he got drunk, he was absolutely out of control. [A]lmost every Saturday night, I would have to beat him up. I was a boxer . . . a Golden Gloves champion when I was younger, so I was really good with my fighting. Joe subsequently got killed, so I felt bad.
HAROLD ZATS  There were no Jewish persons at all in Malden, Missouri, whatsoever . . . in the area I was stationed in, in my barracks, [or] in my actual work. [But that was] no problem. . . . I never grew up with any Jewish people, and [so] I was very comfortable with the people I was working with.

Special training programs

WALTER SCHWARZ  Camp Pickett, Virginia . . . was the training [camp] for the Medical Replacement Corps. . . . However, I also had a talent. . . . I was a French horn player. They heard about it and said, “Would you like to play in the band?” “Oh sure.” They made me the company bugler, too. . . . In one case, we went to a Yom Kippur service, and I was asked to play the *Kol Nidre* on the French horn!

As soon as basic training was over . . . they saw that I spoke some [Central European] languages, and they said, “You should be in the Military Intelligence Service at Camp Ritchie, Maryland.” Camp Ritchie was interesting. You could see German officers walking through. Those were Americans dressed as Germans. They wanted the recruits to recognize the uniforms. You know, we had to learn all the ranks in the German army and the uniforms and what company they came from . . . [in order to be an] [ww, Interrogator of Prisoners of War.

ELLIOTT KARASOV  About a week after we got to the “Hell Hole of the Universe” [basic training at Shepard Field, near Waco], we went on a march with backpacks. . . . They said it was about 100 degrees. The group was followed by a couple of trucks to pick up the men who collapsed. . . . Well we completed the march, some of us. Then we had the basic training, learning to shoot and learning to swear. We learned to climb over barriers and learned how to drill. The usual stuff. . . . It wasn’t difficult. I just did it. And I met some very charming guys. Have you heard the expression . . . “crude, lewd, and tattooed”? You know, full of prejudice, so on and so forth. And many of this [type] were in my group. . . . One time I was in a bull session with some of these men, and we got onto the subject of jail. And there were perhaps five or six of us, and I was the only one who had never been in jail.

After basic, I went to Camp Crowder in Missouri to learn Morse code. [A]n inquiry came around for people with any language background for the ASTP [Army Special Training Program]. My one year of high school French and some Hebrew qualified me. We were assigned to various colleges to learn languages. Well I was lucky, I felt, because I was sent with some of my friends to a college on the East Coast called Harvard. And we were told we were going to learn Chinese culture and language. And when we got there, we were first told we would have to pass

*Elliott Karasov (left) and his brother, Harry, July 1944*
a test given by a college professor. . . . So at this point I chose Hebrew because there was a pro-

fessor of Hebrew literature there named Wolf, and he was apparently famous, they told me. So he sat down and starts talking Hebrew with me. And I stumbled and fumbled along. And after about 15, 30 minutes he says, “I’m going to pass you.” But I didn’t deserve it.

So I was in the Chinese [culture and language] program there . . . but we were still in the Army. In fact, there was one [time when] we had been scheduled to go to some classes when all of a sudden the Army—there were always a few officers hanging around to show that we were in the Army—decided we ought to have some marching . . . and the Harvard authorities objected. They said, “We have these students here we are trying to train. Why should they waste their time drilling?” The Army said, “No, they’re soldiers. They have to be drilled.” Anyway, according to what the Harvard peo-

ple told us, Harvard University . . . is about 100 years older than the Army . . . “and we want to do our jobs. So back off.” And they did . . .

I was home on leave after a semester, and my mother and I saw news of D-Day at a movie in St. Paul. When we went back to Harvard, we were told that the program was closed down. . . . Boy, were we shocked. While now we felt we were pretty flu-

ent, we still didn’t feel that we were finished. Some of the men . . . were sent to Fort Riley, Kansas, to be in charge of horse units. I didn’t even know the Army had horse units. . . . Here people train for a year in Chinese—typical Army. . . . We were sent to Vint Hills Farm Station . . . an intelligence depot. There we were told to forget our Chinese. We were going . . . to learn some Japanese military terminol-

ogy and learn cryptanalysis.

LAURA RAPOPORT BORSTEN The U.S.S. Hunter, as Hunter College, the Bronx, New York, was desig-

nated by the Navy, became a model of its kind for the training of women from February 1943, when it set sail, until October 1945, when its voyage was completed. In that time what had been a blueprint for a more efficient method of indoctrinating recruits grew and evolved so dramatically beyond what was expected of the Women’s Reserve in the first place that waves not only liberated men for the urgent needs of the fleet, but assumed jobs that rose directly out of the war effort . . . jobs that had never before existed.

HOWARD GELB I originally applied for the Navy, but because of my eyesight, there was no way I could get in. So . . . I might as well wait till induc-
tion, and that gave me an opportunity to finish law school. I was drafted and went to Fort Riley, Kansas. . . . In basic [training] there was a farm lad [who asked], “What did you do?” I said, “I went to law school.” “How many years was that?” I said, “Six.” “You mean you did nothing but go to school for six years?” It was inconceivable to him!

From there I was transferred to Georgia, and they put me into the Military Police . . . because I had legal training. My experience there was very interesting. I was the only college graduate in the entire company. The next educated man . . . graduated from high school. Beyond that . . . many of them couldn’t write their own names because they took many people with no skills whatsoever and dumped them into the Military Police.

Someone asked me if I could type . . . because “we need someone to help with the payroll.” Before I knew it, I was supervising about eight different companies. I wanted to enter OCS [Officer Candidate School, but] to do that you had to go through channels. My first sergeant said, “No, we need you too badly here to . . . help with all the payrolls. When the first sergeant went on furlough, I arranged to make application directly to my company commander, and he didn’t hesitate to recommend me. To make a long story short, I was accepted for OCS [in Miami] and got my second lieutenant bars. Shortly thereafter, I was also admitted to the Adjutant General School [in Washington, D.C.].

**JERRY SINYKIN** I was sent to California, to the Infantry Replacement Training Center at Camp Roberts. . . . When the training ended, they picked a bunch of us and sent us up to college at Puget Sound in Washington [for the] ASTP [Army Special Training Program]. . . . They were going to make an engineer out of me. That was wonderful. There were about 300 . . . potential college kids who’d done OK on the exams. There were about 300 coeds and just five male students there. We lived in what had been the girls’ gym. It was an interesting three months. . . . Then the war wasn’t going so well, and they closed the program. I came back to California and was assigned to the 11th Armored Division, 63rd Infantry Battalion, at Camp Cook.

**HAROLD ARENSON** I went to Virginia . . . in the Chesapeake Bay area. . . . We had to carry live ammunition with us ’cause they were always afraid of an invasion. . . . It was a very tough basic training. We’d hike for 35 miles . . . over mountains and everywhere. . . . I mean, combat engineers have to build bridges across rivers [and] do all kinds of construction . . . plus they have [to carry] their normal 57 [mm. antitank] guns. People would pass out on the hikes . . . To end up our basic training, we went to North Carolina on maneuvers . . . [There I had] my first experience with snakes that would actually be deadly, you know, poisonous snakes. . . . Right in the midst of all this, I was accepted [to enter either an] ASTP or OCS. . . .

[I chose] ASTP [, which] gave me a chance to go to school and maybe earn a degree. So here I am in the middle of the [North Carolina] jungle and I pack up for Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the most gorgeous school you ever saw in you life. . . . So what happens? In about two months, the program breaks up and all us young guys are shipped down to L.A. for a short basic training to go overseas. We went into the 84th Infantry Division, and I was assigned to the antitank company in New Jersey.

**LIONEL GREENBERG** Preflight training [in Texas] was pretty good because they had some former teachers . . . [who] knew how to teach. . . . They taught us a little math, a little weather, related subjects. When we got into navigation, what we had was guys like me who had just finished navigation school . . . [teaching] dead reckoning and how to use maps and
... the Weems Plotter and the compass. The hardest part for me was how to use the sextant for night navigation. ... When [I finished] ... they gave me a week’s vacation, and I had to go to Boise, Idaho. The crew they assigned me to had already been in training for a month. It [was] a little hard to break in.

JOE GARELICK When I finished gunnery school [in Las Vegas] ... we got on a troop train to Mountain Home, Idaho, out of Boise about 60 miles. [Our crew] trained ... and we actually had dogfights up in the air. [Here’s] what we would do. In Pocatello, Idaho, there was an Army Air [Corps] fighter [group]. They would escort us to Oregon. In Oregon, there was a Navy base, and they sent up their fighters to intercept us and shoot us down. We had cameras on our guns to take pictures. In the U.S. we’re not going to shoot down planes—we’re going to pretend we’re shooting. So this camera [was] mounted so it [aimed] through the gun sight. ... When I came back, we looked at my pictures, and I was very close to getting the plane. I was in the ball turret then.

LEON FRANKEL When I took the train up to Hibbing, it was the first time I had ever left home. ... I was a little homesick until I met up with these other guys ... who were also in the same boat ... a camaraderie developed. ... They gave us hotel rooms and they fed us at the hotel. ... They gave us some kind of a uniform. It wasn’t an official uniform. It might have been something left over from the ccc [Civilian Conservation Corps] days. It was a kind of a green thing and had a cap. We had kind of like wings on. As I say, we were the only semblance of anything military. All the eligible males were all gone away from town, so we were dating the local girls. On Saturday night somebody would volunteer a car and we would go out, do all the [Iron] Range towns, Virginia and Eveleth. ... Everyone made us feel very welcome.

We were flying Piper Cubs [single-engine planes, used as trainers] with wheels and there was snow on the ground, a lot of snow. It was winter and Hibbing is buried in snow. We were practicing. I only had a few hours solo and I was sent out one day to practice spins. So I would go out to a crossroad and put the airplane in a nosedive. No, first you stall. The nose drops and you get over a road and you do about three or four turns and then you take
it out of the spin. I got disoriented and I started looking around and I couldn’t find the field. Everything was white and it started to snow. I panicked. This was only on my second or third solo. I started flying around and the gas gauge indicator started going down and I didn’t know what to do.

So I decided the best thing to do is try to come down and land somewhere... some farmer’s field. There were no trees, nice and smooth... I didn’t realize the snow was over plowed furrows. I came down in a field. Of course, no skis on the plane, just wheels. And the plane rolled along about fifty feet and flipped over and set down. I wasn’t hurt. I was hanging upside down in the airplane, trying to figure out how to get the heck out of it. Of course, I had my seatbelt on. I pulled the seatbelt and I went crashing right through the roof of the plane. . . . [I]t was canvas, so I tore my way through and climbed out, and I spotted a farmhouse about maybe 100 yards away, 150 yards. I walked over there. Wasn’t dressed for winter because... this was kind of unexpected. . . . [I] didn’t even have a flight suit on.

I made my way to this guy’s house and I pointed to the airplane out there... He said he didn’t have a phone. He was living by himself. He said his neighbor had a phone, so he gave me a pair of boots and a jacket and some mitts... and he and I and his dog started out to the neighbor’s house, which was about half a mile away. We got to his house and he had one of those crank phones, so he cranked it up and called the operator and got the airfield... They didn’t know where I was. I told them everything. They came and got me... next day I was reading [in] the Hibbing paper, “Local pilot killed in a crash near Forbes.”

I was stationed during my advanced flight training at... Barron Field... part of the Pensacola [, Florida, ] complex... After a number of months training in Florida, I was just about at the point of graduating when a British naval officer flew in with a TBM [a single-engine torpedo bomber]. So my buddy Grady Jean and I started a conversation with this British naval officer and we were really impressed with [this airplane]. We had never seen one before. He started telling us how diverse the airplane was and the things that it could do. It could carry bombs, torpedoes, rockets and machine guns and could lay mines... completely versatile. I looked at Grady and he looked at me... We made up our minds right then and there that we were going to opt for torpedoes... Our commanding officer, who was a famous Navy ace by the name of McCampbell... wanted us to be fighter pilots because he was. We just stood our guns... ”Okay,” and he signed us off and said when we graduated we would be sent to our operational training to learn to fly the TBM.
4. Shipping Out

Convoy duty for troop transports

LLOYD HOLLANDER diary, August 14, 1942. Boy what a night. We had a general alarm and everybody manned battle stations. It looked like the 4th of July with all the shells exploding. One of the corvettes spotted a sub surfaced and gave the alarm. We are looking forward to another big night as conditions are ideal for subs. September 20, 1942. All hell broke loose, it seems. It all started when we ran across a sub on the surface yesterday morning just as the fog lifted. Next day after a series of contacts, the subs sank one of the freighters. . . . They are still hot on our trail, and we are trying to shake them off. So far no luck. September 23, 1942. Had convoy scattered by very severe gale. Finally assembled convoy and then had a sub attack and lost three ships. Out of the original 24, we have 11 left and probably won’t have that many by the time we finally reach Ireland.

Two views of crossing by convoy

TED PAPERMASTER On April 29, 1943, we boarded ship (I think it was named the Edmund B. Alexander) and headed for the North Africa. We were double loaded; that is, one person was asleep in the bunk at night and his partner was up on deck. Then they switched for 12 hours. We got two meals a day. Two station hospital units were with us and the female nurses made things a bit more civilized. It was the largest convoy ever and the Battleship Texas was the capital vessel along with many destroyers. I think by this time the Allied navies were beginning to get the upper hand against the German submarine menace.
We were about two days from Gibraltar at exactly 3:00 AM when there was a loud explosion, and the ship suddenly stopped. I was certain that we had been hit by a torpedo, so I grabbed my musette bag with the three cans of C rations and other supplies, and my life jacket and rushed out into the hallway filled with frightened men. The tension was immediately relieved when some unknown loud voice with a sense of humor called out: “What’s the matter? Haven’t any of you heard a gasket blow before?” We later learned that our ship had been built in England for Germany before World War I and was confiscated by the British for their own use. When WWII came along, they changed engines from a coal burner to an oil burner and this was the maiden voyage for the new engine. Now we were adrift in the middle of the Atlantic, because the entire convoy kept going without us!

KENNETH BENDER The troop ship uss Florence Nightingale was waiting [, and] we were packed in like sardines. . . . The ocean crossing was rough [so that] on one occasion [the ship] had a 40 degree list. . . . There were approximately 30 ships. . . . In the convoy was one American battleship, the uss Texas. . . . In addition there were several destroyers [, which] weaved in and out of the convoy dropping depth charges and mines to destroy enemy submarines. [My] B Company was selected to be the “Guard Company” during the crossing . . . to make certain [of a] complete blackout.

At sea

JERRY SINYKIN In the fall of 1943, a number of us were sent to New York to go overseas as an advance party for the [11th Armored] Division. . . . I traveled on the Queen Mary with Winston Churchill, who was coming back from his Canadian visit. . . . He told us we “still had time to prove our mettle.”

It was a good trip because there was also a company of Trinidadian wacs on board and an American Red Cross contingent of young girls volunteering. But it was the fastest trip the Queen had ever made across the ocean 'cause Churchill was on board. It had destroyer escorts all the way and [patrol bombers] as far as they could fly.

BOB HARRIS letter to his family, November 1943. I just came in the office after a two-hour sunset lookout drill. My post now is on the bridge as a lookout. We had a special drill, as we are passing through very dangerous waters. It has been a miracle that our ship—so big and in such enemy-infested waters—has come all this way (better than half way around the world) without a scratch. . . . Just yesterday we heard that an American destroyer was sunk in the exact same bay where we were located the day before. . . . But we’re still afloat and alive and that’s something. . . . First of all, we made it across the country to Australia in record time. We left Newport News, Virginia, and went through the Canal and way down past the Equator. Just at the Equator we had an initiation for all of the members of the crew—officers and enlisted men—who have never sailed below the Equator. The fellows who have been below it gave us the “works.” It was loads of fun. They shaved all of our heads. You should have seen me the past two weeks. All my black curls were off and all of the fellows looked like babies. Our entire heads were clipped clean. It was cool too. The weather on the way over was grand. Just a few storms here and there. We passed New Zealand and landed October 29 in Brisbane, Australia, where [General Douglas] MacArthur’s headquarters are located.
Bob Harris (right) with his brother, Sid
It is a busy city but [we] didn’t get any liberty there, as we were there just long enough to load
on troops and sailors and let off some. Here we let off, among some of the Naval officers, this
boy from Minneapolis, Leonard Zieve. I told him I’d try to have you call his mother and tell
her he arrived safely. She lives up [in] North Minneapolis. He is going to New Caledonia, a
small island, and will be put on a submarine chaser. It is lousy duty.

HAROLD ZATS  We lined up to ship out in June 1944, and I guess there must have been a cou-
ples thousand people, ’cause we were going to board a troop ship to somewhere. We had no
idea where we were going. You’re standing in line at attention, early morning, not knowing
what’s going on, and they designated one too many persons, so . . . they had to take one per-
son out of that lineup. The way they chose this person was with the first letter of his last
name. Mine was Z, so I was cut . . . and did not ship out that day with this group, who ended
up going to the South Pacific theater.

Two to three weeks later . . . we lined up again. . . . You’ve got all your equipment, your
guns, and your backpack. . . . I was five foot five and 125 pounds. . . . I had a hard time get-
ting up the gangplank with this probably 75 pounds on my back. I met a man named
Raymond Trbon, and we became fast friends. . . . He helped me get up the gangplank by
pushing me up.

I shipped out to Italy [on] the General McCullough. . . . We had small canvas bunks. . . . There
was a Jewish man [whose bunk was] beneath me, and he was trying to keep kosher. . . . He had
a hard time, but they didn’t give us much to eat anyway. . . . Only two times a day you’d get
anything to eat, and . . . it’d be two hours in line before you got to where you’d pick up an
apple and a couple of things.

HAROLD SPECKTOR  On January 5th we sailed out of New York. You’re crossing the Atlantic
in January. . . . It was nine days of seasickness. I think there was one day that we hit a calm
spot, and I was able to go up and play basketball.

[We were] all special troops. There had to be close to 5,000 of us. . . . It was a luxury liner,
the uss United States. We went without convoy ’cause the ship could out-speed any sub, and
they had all the sonar and everything they needed. It took us nine days from New York to
Marseilles. . . . Everybody got off the ship and kissed the ground.

JOE BROCHIN  Finally . . . they ship [us] 40 men to Oakland, California, escorted by an MP
[Military Police] motorcycle group. We all had winter clothing and so on. We go on board
ship, and lo and behold, they give us cabins with showers instead of sleeping in hammocks
five floors down. We find this [was a tourist ship that] belonged to the South African govern-
ment. . . . They allowed our group up on deck, provided we didn’t smoke . . . ’cause you can
see a lighted cigarette 10 miles out at sea. The only bad thing was we were wondering why
the winter clothing. . . . I kept telling the fellows, “We’ll probably go through the Panama
Canal . . . over to Europe.” Well, we kept going [farther and farther west]. Finally, we’re way
over in the South Pacific. Believe it or not, we landed in New Caledonia . . . [and] had to
march about 20 miles with winter shirts and underwear!

ALAN RICH letters to his wife, Rose. Somewhere at sea [date censored]. I hope that you’re
writing to me every day. . . . Be sure to send me all the news about Susan. . . . How I would
have enjoyed being at her birthday party. . . . Sweetheart, isn’t it hard to realize that she is two
years old now? From absolutely nothing to a real girl. How my mouth waters for that little
child face. [Date censored.] None of us know where we will be sent on arrival. It can be a
hundred and one places down here. I doubt very much if we will be permitted to disclose our
station.

FANNIE SCHANFIELD  The days were changing, lilacs budding, my waistline was bigger and
the days were getting longer and I was more anxious for a letter. It was 28 April ’44 . . . Pa
yells that he will answer as he is on his way out. He calls out, “It’s a telegram for you,” and
I answer back, “Be sure to tip him,” as I was half dressed in my nightgown. I walk toward
the front of the house. By this time the delivery boy has left, and the folks are saying in uni-
son, “Read it! What does it say?”

My hands trembled so I could hardly rip open the envelope and I began to read aloud, “We
regret to inform you that your husband, Melvin M. Stock, SN37268257, is reported missing
due to enemy action on 20 April 44, by a predawn aerial attack six miles off the North African
coast in the Mediterranean Sea. Four hundred and ninety-eight personnel are reported miss-

Alan, Rose, and Susan Rich
5.  Active Duty: Daily Life

Roughing it in Europe

JERRY SINYKIN  You see, as a young soldier, you’re a kid—remember, I turned 21 on the Rhine River—you see the war in a microcosm. You have no idea what’s going on. . . . We were in a kind of formal parking lot after we came from the coast of France at night, and suddenly for the first time, a plane came over and the sky lit up with antiaircraft fire. This was the real thing! Eventually, we see the plane on fire go down. You could hear the cheer, like at a football game. The next morning, we find out it was one of our own. This, you know, is kind of typical of the story.

Your concerns are where you’re going to sleep tonight, who’s going to dig the hole, who’s going to stand guard, are the Germans able to strafe you, is that shelling getting closer or further, are you going to eat something, and most important, where can you get some dry socks? Those are the really important issues, day in and day out. You’re cold, hungry, and dirty. The little mundane things like bathroom—ain’t no bathrooms. It’s cold. The ground is frozen. You’re out in the boondocks. . . .

On a cold winter day in Belgium, a treaded . . . M-8 vehicle was trying to pull a large gun up a slippery, icy road—à la Minnesota style. It wasn’t getting any traction. It was skidding

General George Patton, reviewing troops from his jeep, “War Eagle”
and sliding. All the infantrymen standing around thought this was pretty funny to watch, when a “simonized” jeep drove up with three stars on it. Inside the jeep was an officer in a simonized helmet in pink jodhpurs. I don’t know if they were pink or light tan . . . and it was [General George] Patton. He got out of the jeep and assessed the situation and said something to the effect, “Would you gentlemen”—referring to all the infantrymen standing around—“kindly get off your behinds, get up behind that vehicle, and push it up the hill?” Now that’s not exactly it, word for word. . . . It was blue from start to finish. The pearl-handled pistols and the shiny boots. . . . You jumped pretty fast when the commanding general was there.

**REUBEN BERMAN letter to his wife, March 21, 1945**

Dearest Isabel,

How would you like to take a bath in a helmet? It really isn’t as difficult as it sounds. You need a helmet full of water, a washcloth and some soap and some sunlight. . . . Anyway it is very cold. You use the cloth with the soap first and you must be careful to wring out the rag well before rinsing it in the helmet. The water in the helmet becomes rather unpotable. I have rigged up a hot water heater out of the alcohol burner that comes with something. I set the burner in the bottom of a C rations can, punch holes in the sides for ventilation, and set a cup of water on top. It works fine for shaving.

I suppose the reason my information of affairs at home is fragmentary is that I move around so much my mail is delayed and sometimes lost. You never can depend that any single communication will arrive.

I don’t need a thing really. I’m getting along fine. The nights here are invariably quiet which is quite a relief from England where the frequent alerts for buzz bombs would keep us up often.

Love, Reuben

**HAROLD ARENSON** We got to the Belgium border. . . . We pitched tents out in this field. I said, “Geez, wouldn’t it be nice to be able to take a shower or a bath or something?” Across this field were homes, Belgian homes. Three of us decided we’d walk across this field and see if we could get a bath. The people were very nice. [The woman of the household] brought out a great big . . . metal tub in the kitchen, filled it with water, and we all took a bath in there. . . . They didn’t have a lot of food because the Germans had occupied them for a long time. She brought out a couple cookies and gave them to us. It was really very nice, except that when we left [we saw that] our company had packed up already. The trucks were all loaded, and here are these three lousy tents in the middle of the field. We ran. I never ran so fast in my life, grabbed the tent . . . [had no] time to fold it, threw it in the truck, and got [in]. . . . That was a horrible experience. . . . [But] we had a nice bath anyhow.
Jules Levin

The best part about our rest stop, next to being out of the line of fire, was that we were able to sleep indoors and were protected from the . . . cold wind and freezing temperatures. One must wonder where we slept and how we managed our bodily functions when we were in the field. There were several choices for sleeping . . . inside the tank was one possibility. This would be the only choice if we were under fire, but you would have to sleep in a sitting position, exposed to the cold steel inside the tank. Mostly we slept on the ground outside the tank. If there was a threat of artillery, we could sleep under the tank, but most of the time we slept alongside the tank. The only articles of clothing that I removed were my helmet, boots and jacket. I would take off my boots and wrap them in my jacket. This would be my pillow—not very comfortable, but if the boots weren’t kept warm during the night, they would be so stiff I couldn’t get them on the next morning.

Leonard Parker

Every time we stopped [we dug a foxhole]. It was standard operating procedure . . . If you were lucky, you’d find a hole where their forward line used to be and you’d get in the hole [if you heard a shell coming]. But they also had slit trenches for pooping, you know. But a hole is a hole. This one time, I heard the shell coming in. I was running, and I dove into this thing and it was all full of crap. So I was covered from head to toe, and there was no way of cleaning up for at least three, four days . . . That’s not funny!

[We had] K rations and C rations. They’re in little boxes, and they had cheese and . . . that’s how we ate. Then we foraged off the land a lot. Stopping at farmhouses, and sometimes we’d force them to cook. That was a treat when we got a hot meal.

I had trench foot [from wet socks] . . . There are times when things stop and you get a day or two, and they’d bring up things to help you clean up. Most of the time, you just made
Jerry Weinberg, Leyte, Philippines, 1945

Jerry Weinberg, *Journal, November 24, 1943.* At 8:30 PM . . . there were amphibious ducks waiting to take us ashore [at New Caledonia, New Guinea]. . . . After a three-mile ride on a paved road . . . we were put [up] for the night in tents. It was a strange place to us and there wasn’t much sleep the first night. The next day we were given a talk by our CO concerning the jungle precautions to be taken, rules, and many other things to help us in the strange place. After being given the morning off to look the place over for the first time, we were put on a detail digging trenches and latrines. . . . Of course with all the coconut trees around we had to taste our first ones. The Philippino [sic] boys climbed the trees with their great skill for such things and cut down many nuts with their bolo knives.

There wasn’t a thing to this replacement outfit when we first arrived. Immediately the bulldozers started to go to work knocking down the coconut trees and cleared the area. . . . Some of the details we pulled were: KP duty, guard duty, warehouse work, ship loading, jungle clearing, road work, cement mixing, tent pitching, carpenter work, mail sorting. . . .

We lived in tents, five men to a tent, with candles as the source of light at night. We had no mattresses or pillows for our cots, but later on got used to the idea and couldn’t figure out how it would be possible
to get used to the soft padding at home again. Usually there’d be a lizard or centipede crawl in bed with one, but that also got to be bearable. If it weren’t for the mosquito bar that was tucked in every night, we’d all be having malaria. A few interesting facts: In this hole were all kinds of insects, bugs, lizards up to six feet long . . . lots of biting ants, snakes of all kinds, land crabs, malaria mosquitoes, big flies, various birds with their jungle cries and many more animals and insects I’ve never heard of before. In the 275th we had a tamed boar we called Eleanor. She sure was a wild one. There are Papuan natives on this island . . . [who] are very useful to the government of the US, as they built many of the buildings . . . of jungle poles and palm tree leaves. They also work with malaria control. Many of them talk fairly good English and are very friendly. They love our cigarettes and will wash clothes for a few smokes. The mail situation was very bad. I didn’t receive any mail for five weeks after arriving in New Guinea. One can’t imagine what pleasure a soldier overseas has in receiving mail from home. One would think that being only 200 miles from the front lines that we would know all about the war. The truth of the matter is, all we know is what we read in the “Mosquito” [the daily one-page paper].

**Lloyd Hollander diary, Dec. 5, 1944.** These are sad days aboard the Spencer. The day before yesterday we were on our way to refuel when we ran aground some coral reef, tearing a couple of holes in the bottom of the hull. . . . I feel worse about this than when I lost my girl. There are other girls but no ship like [the Spencer].
Dear Capt. Alan R. Rich, USNR
APO 996
RSY Dr. A NEIMAN
690 Postmaster San Francisco Cal

[Signature]

June 6, 1944

[Handwritten:] Tuesday night

Dearest darling: Letter 6 one page
White should be called "D-day" letter. You know why. You must have had the
news of the invasion just as we got it, but I'm sure I knew before you. At
2:30 this morning the telephone rang, and a voice calmly announced that it was
station WCOU calling to report the invasion had begun, and suggested that I
turn on my radio to their station. Unfortunately I couldn't turn it on be-
cause your child was already up and wanted to say good morning, grandma." Now
ever I heard an immediate buzz of radio from nearby apartments, indicating
that their tenants had already subscribed by penny postcard to the so-called
fantastic idea of the radio station of informing us by telephone of the in
vasion. Well, it felt fantastic to get the news on the telephone. I can't
say I was elated. I was thrilled, but no in the sense of being happy. I
was thrilled because it was exciting news that I as well as other persons
knew was on the calendar, but in the busy future. And furthermore, I was
immediately and when I realized what a series of deaths and sorrows it would
immediately. And whatever it meant, none of those persons knew
the invasion was very good and over what it meant, none of those persons did.
I understand that all prov
spective furloughs and leaves have been cancelled, so although we haven't
heard from you, we don't expect him. Had a note from him this morning con
fessing that she met me at the station and that we--including Jeanette,
thing. I have given her your new address when I see her. Finally,
planning immediately. I will give her your new address when I see her. Finally,
her. Finally, tomorrow. Sorry about
managed to weigh up a five pound box for you containing three cans of soup,
money for the Red Cross and this Fund. Thank you very much.

[Handwritten:] Rose Rich and daughter, Susan,
in Duluth
ABE SPERLING diary, May 3, 1944. Today makes one month since I came to China. Have done no constructive work at all. Only work done was [to] assist . . . log[ging] the road. . . . Actual logging took nine days. . . . Drove to K643 [and] saw a great number of cars which had been abandoned along Burma Road during evacuation [in] 1942. June 16, 1944. We were told today that last night the radio carried a flash that Tokyo had been bombed by B29s from China. June 19, 1944. We hear conflicting reports on what is going on in the war, so don’t know what to believe. However, in view of added transportation activities on [the Burma] Road and fact that go-ahead has been given on . . . bridge over river, the offensive across the Salween [River] must be going OK. Sept. 19, 1944. Rain all day. Went into Paoshan for New Year Services but got in too late. . . . Met Dr. and Mrs. Kamieniecki, Polish Jews who have been stranded in China for the past five years. They are working for the Chinese Red Cross with Chinese 71st Army. He is an MD. They spent the night here.

Food, drink, and lighter moments

MERLE HILLIARD The Navy had recruited B-School [business school] students because they wanted business-oriented officers to work in defense plants as the Officers-on-Site. Having been prepared to do this job, I received orders to [go to] a nice Jewish place called the Solomon Islands, specifically Guadalcanal. There I was able to use my education. Financing War Industries meant paying the troops in cash so they could shoot craps and buy candy at the base PX. Accounting for War Industry was keeping track of the number of pallets loaded onto ships, or using a stopwatch to check the time it took to load each pallet was a form of Production Engineering. . . .

Officers’ quarters were located in a coconut grove, planted by Lever Brothers. When the coconuts were ripe we bribed one of the natives to climb up and harvest a few coconuts. The officers’ mess then had coconut
cream pie. We were always careful on windy days to wear our steel battle helmets because a coconut falling from that height could create a big dent in a person’s skull!

During the time I was overseas, about every four months my mother ordered dried salami from Feinberg’s Kosher Sausage in Minneapolis. She would hang it [for a while longer to] get it as dry as possible before mailing it. But it took two months in transit, so by the time it arrived it was encrusted with mold. But when it arrived my Jewish friends and I scraped off the mold and ate it with no qualms. It was a taste of home.

LARRY SCHLASINGER letter to his parents, April 22, 1944
Dearest Folks,
We’ve been enjoying the scenery at our new location and getting doses of spring fever. I’ve actually gotten to like English beer, which is quite different from ours. There are some really picturesque old pubs (bars) nearby, where we go when they are able to get stock. Rations on such things are pretty short, so it becomes a sort of weekly event while the stuff lasts.

Our unit is giving a party for the kids in the vicinity soon—they’re always asking us for gum, so we’ve got them a lot, plus some candy, etc. Those items are still scarce here, even for us. Saw a movie last night. Nothing much else doing just now and most of us don’t mind. We’re resting and loving it.

I have a pass to visit Stratford-on-Avon, Shakespeare’s birthplace, and will see one of his plays while there. England is full of historic spots, and I’ve managed to see a few really colorful ones.

Before I forget—there are some things I’d like to have, if possible: food of any kind, especially candy, canned fruit and cookies (in small boxes). Also a khaki sweater, sleeveless or otherwise, And if you can get it, a couple of bottles of Parker 51 Ink, black, for my good pen. Please send separate packages if necessary. Finally, if you can pack it small enough, my sleeping bag. Don’t worry about that too much though. More soon.

Love, Larry

DAN HEILICHER journal, Sept. 17, 1944. Tonight I’m in Paris & have been staying overnite here for the last 3 nites. The ATC [Air Training Command] has taken over a hotel here & my pilot & myself have a suite of our own. To go into description of it would take pages. Sept. 20, 1944. Yesterday I was again in Paris. . . . When we eat at our hotel, we are served by waiters in tuxedos carrying beautiful silver trays—on them, C-rations! There really isn’t too much food there. Even the generals eat there, so you can see it’s the best we can get. Oct. 12, 1944. I received my election ballot today & voted for Roosevelt and Truman. This is the first time I have been eligible to
vote & here I am, thousands of miles from home. **Feb. 12, 1945.** Yesterday afternoon I got a phone call in operations. . . . It was Newt Wolpert and he had just got in town on a 48 hour pass. . . . [He] really looks good. He has seen quite a bit of action and was lucky to get up here on a pass. . . . We roamed around the Montemarte [sic] section for awhile and then went over to some of the cabarets on the Champs Élysées. I left him in one of the bars about eleven o’clock because I had to be out to the field early this morning. . . . Incidentally, Newt is a wiz in this French and a killer with these French women. He speaks French as good as I speak English.

**ARNOLD FRISHBERG** We would meet ships out at sea . . . big ones . . . and we started pumping gas and oil. [But] we never stopped [moving.] or we would have been at the mercy of the sea. Day after day after day just sailing around, looking for a ship we could refuel—an aircraft carrier or battleships. [They were] gigantic. You can’t imagine how big they were. [They] looked like the Foshay Tower lying down.

Then we had a period of time when there was nothing going on. The doctor decided he would have “short arm inspection.” . . . They lined up [all the men] by sections, and they stripped. The doctor inspected their penises to see whether they were keeping them clean or in trouble . . . [after liberty on shore]. Well, these were 20-year-olds. They drank beer and lost their. . . . The doctor wanted to make sure they didn’t get infected. Well, there were about a half dozen the doctor decided should be circumcised. . . . So that was my introduction to surgery. I did six of them. The doctor would watch me . . . then say, “OK, you got ‘em.”

**HAROLD ARENSON** I was in Neufchâteau, Belgium [, and] this one woman, young woman, invited me to her farmhouse. We had wonderful meals. Farms did pretty good because they grew their own stuff. . . . We had . . . mussels! Then they put a pail by every chair. So you used one of the mussels to pry the other mussels open. . . . For a Jew to be eating mussels. . . . I didn’t like them too much either. They cook them in wine, but the whole thing is, they never get the sand out of them. Boy, you’re chewing these and there’s nothing but sand. Oh, I managed to get through this great big pile of them, because I didn’t want to insult them. Then she brought me a few more because she thought I enjoyed them!

[Later, after being discharged from a hospital in London,] I had a delay en route. . . . We . . . had a wonderful week in [in Scotland]. . . . We met a couple of
girls, and we went out to a nice restaurant and we were eating this steak. I said, “Geez, it’s wartime and steak!” Then I see a little sign that says, “We serve horsemeat.” That took care of my appetite.

TED PAPERMASTER One day we discovered that there was an astonishing deficiency of beer at Foggia [Italy], and so we sent the workhorse B-25 (the “Worry Bird”) to a favorite brewery across the Mediterranean to Algiers, where they had an amazing excess of 26 barrels. The crew was Dick Willsie, pilot; Mickey Ellis, co-pilot; Mike Hormel, crew chief; and me, passenger-at-large. The fifth person was a Jewish soldier who was a fighter for the British army in the Jewish Brigade. I befriended him when he asked for a ride back to Italy. After proper international and mutually affable trade negotiations, we stashed the beer in the bomb bay and assorted other areas and took off. In a few minutes we noticed the oil pressure in the left engine was dropping and oil and smoke were issuing forth. As we were losing altitude and total disaster appeared imminent, I guiltily suggested to Mike that he and I get back to the hold and jettison the beer. He gave me a withering, “are you crazy?” look with appropriate expletives. Well, at that moment we spotted a British landing field (I think it was near Telegma). We headed for the landing and I could see the emergency vehicles racing toward the runway. Willsie made the best landing he ever made in his life. The US taxpayers generously paid for a new engine and in a few days the 26 barrels were delivered intact to a grateful 82nd. And I remember during the scary final approach, I had to disguise my own terror so as not to alarm the Jewish kid with us. I often wonder what happened to him.

I had another charming undertaking almost two years later, around March or so of 1945. The war was obviously winding down. At Foggia airfield . . . there was a company of aviation protective troops armed with .50 caliber machine guns and 20 mm cannon housed in bunkers surrounding our airstrip. They had their own command and supply organization. Their commanding officer came to our commanding officer for some help to cope with a peculiar problem. It seems his men had managed to obtain the services of a number of local girls who moved in with the GIs for the price of food, clothes and shelter in exchange for rendering a certain well-known commodity. Everybody was happy, except the commanding officer. Well our CO was not quite up to the task, maybe they didn’t teach them about such matters at West Point, so he came to me [a flight surgeon] for the purpose of taking action. I borrowed the CO’s .45 and gathered my medical men and a new member, the MAC (Medical Administrative Officer) in my two ambulances. We swept through their area arresting all the nice girls—thirteen of them, plus one had a year-old baby—and deposited them at the Foggia Clinic Celtica, the name of the prostitutes’ clinic. Prostitution is legal in Italy and the ladies are under periodic governmental license and inspection.
Joe Garelick (left) and his brother, Saul
JOE GARELICK  This Mormon kid . . . slept across from me. One night, I get up . . . and he asks me, “Where are you going?”  “Cecil, why aren’t you sleeping?”  “Joe, I can’t sleep. . . . Do you think we’re going on a mission?”  So I says, “Cecil, I’m going outside. I’ll take a look and see how the weather is.”  I want him to sleep because I don’t want him to be dead [tired] in the plane. I go outside, and the stars are shining. I come back in and I say, “Cecil, when we get up tomorrow morning, it’s going to be raining like crazy. We’ll never go.” What do you think happened? It rained!

I got a 10-day furlough in London. . . . During the day on Saturday and Sunday . . . all the seats [in the theater in Covent Garden] were covered with a dance floor. That’s where we danced. It rolled out on wheels. . . . I went there twice with my brother.

BOB HARRIS letters to his family. Undated. [The uss General John Pope] is a good ship and I have an excellent job, but I am getting tired of living my life on a terrain about 600 or more feet long. I know every niche and corner of the ship and without plenty of entertainment, books or letters to write or movies to see, the life does get dull and monotonous. All we look forward to is to get back to the U.S. This is going to be a long trip. . . . It will be wonderful though if I do get to meet Sid [his brother]. . . . When you are looking forward to something like that, it helps a lot in keeping your mind active.

Today a young Jewish soldier came in the office and wanted to know if I could help him with a geometrical problem. I tried but it was over my head. Several of the officers tried too, but none of us could help with the problem. Then I asked him what he was trying to do. He said very seriously he was studying higher mathematics. He has taken about seven math courses including integral calculus at the University of Columbia [sic] and was just brushing up on this stuff aboard as he had nothing to occupy his time. You can imagine how this long trip must be to all the soldiers with none of the luxuries and conveniences that I have at my disposal. . . . This soldier was the first I have ever seen trying to occupy his time with anything quite so studious. Most of the soldiers write letters, go to movies and sweat like hell, sleep a lot, play cards, gamble, read whatever they can get their hands on and gossip and eat the rest of the times. There isn’t much for those to do who do not have a regularly assigned detail. . . . [M]any of them come up to you and beg for the opportunity to do some work around the ship. We have five watch repairmen busy all the day long. July 7, 1945. The night we were at our last stop we did something I’ll never forget. . . . We let the troops off and they all went on to the pier, which was securely guarded. . . . [T]he American [Red] Cross chapter down in this country had it all arranged to meet our ship with its load of soldiers. They had a wonderful Army band, a fair U.S.O. stage show, several side shows, about ten booths selling coca colas, bananas for 10 cents a bunch, magazines, candy and gum, souvenirs and a four-lane counter serving free cold drinks and doughnuts prepared by the Red Cross girls, most of whom were young and very attractive. Met a girl there from Minneapolis. If we go back through this port again (which if I stay on this ship for another trip we will undoubtedly do), I have a date with her. You know me, a gal in every port.

HAROLD ZATS  We were up early in the morning for the [bombing] missions, and we worked in the airfield all day getting the pilots ready to go and coming back. . . . In the evenings [we] were free. Eventually, I met some musicians. The cook was a clarinet player. One of the guys was a trumpet player and [another was] a saxophone player, and in the little uso in downtown Grosseto, [Italy,] we met a black piano man from a name band. So we formed a band, and
we played every night in a little place that was almost like a mortuary, but it had big ceilings. . . . We’d play jazz for the guys. They’d bring in Italian girls and we played. . . . [M]y brother would send me kosher salami with wax on it, and after we played at night, the cook would take it into the field kitchen and make salami and eggs.

**Jewish identity**

KENNETH BENDER  Approximately one week prior to leaving Wales for the invasion of Normandy, Captain Keith Schmedeman [the regimental adjutant] informed me and all of the men of [my] company who were of Jewish faith . . . [that] the enemy would not take one as a prisoner of war if one was Jewish. In other words, all of us who were Jews would be killed if captured.

The men sent by Captain Schmedeman had a machine to change the religious designation on our dog tags. . . . The Jewish soldiers were told to line up [and] were given the option of changing our dog tags to C (Catholic) or P (Protestant) from H (Hebrew). As the Captain, I was the one who was asked first. I said, “Sir, I will not make the change.” Each of the other Jewish soldiers in the unit also refused, echoing my words over and over. . . . My Grandma Becky used to say, “You are born a Jew and you die a Jew.”
BOB HARRIS letters to his family
April 8, 1944. I hope that by now you have all received the letters I sent you just before we pulled the last line off our ship and shoved off the morning of April 6, 1944. The trip so far has been most enjoyable. More than half of our cargo this time is Filipinos—many of whom are real natives from the Philippine Islands who fought with MacArthur before this war actually started... [T]he rest are composed of 800 Negroes and white soldiers of all kinds of divisions and outfits—a mixed unit... The day we left I was eating supper in the mess hall and was emptying my tray in the garbage after finishing eating when someone yelled to me, “Hello, Bob Harris.” It was one of the young Brochin boys. I don’t remember his first name, but he graduated the University Pharmacy school two years after I got my degree. He is a nice kid and I feel kinda sorry for him... he’s had no breaks either in the army... He told me his brother Ben is going in too. Also, that when he was home in Minneapolis the first of March, 1944, Jewish fellows from the North Side were inducted into the army. Boy, pretty soon there won’t even be anybody going to Malcoff’s [Delicatessen on Minneapolis’s North Side] except the old folks.

Before I go any further, I want to stop here and tell you of the biggest thrill I have had in a long time... The day before we sailed I had discussed the possibility of holding a seder aboard our ship with our Methodist minister, who knows nothing about our religion. But he... got in touch with the Jewish Welfare Board of San Francisco and they brought us about 90 or 100 boxes of goodies specially packed individually. He also got several big boxes of matzos, two quarts of wine, a box of canned gefilte fish and a box of herring in the jars.

—I had to stop typing as we had an Abandon Ship Drill—It is now 2 a.m., 11 April, and I am up this late as I have to be up every fourth night to type up the press news for the ship—hence will try to finish where I left off the other day—

Harold Zats (on drums) and the band he played with, Grosseto, Italy
We still didn’t know [how many soldiers] to expect for services . . . . [T]here was no Jewish chaplain aboard. But I talked to the [Methodist] Chaplain and we decided to call a meeting of all Jewish soldiers the following day—the first morning of Passover seder night. We got about 30 boys [to attend the meeting] . . . and were surprised at the wonderful showing, so we went ahead and with me in charge. I put various soldiers to work getting things ready for the seder. I got Lt. Fink, the only religious Jewish Navy officer aboard, who happens also to be our Supply Officer (very convenient), to help out. . . . [W]e managed to find a few Hag-gadahs [, and]Lt. Fink found some horseradish. The Executive Officer gave us permission to have the lights on after [the] 7:00 “Darken Ship” and we took over one-fourth of the Mess Hall, spread table cloths from the Officers’ Ward Room on our mess tables, laid out silverware, cups for the teeny bit of wine we all had, and trays for the food. . . . I forgot to mention, we also had ten Marine guards around the mess hall so nobody walked near our services. . . . [F]irst we had the brochas [blessings] for the matzos . . . then for the wine we all shared, then we prayed over the horseradish and matzos. We had two Army men and Lt. Fink preside . . . Mr. Fink and I were the only Navy men at the services. For our meal we had gefilte fish . . . herring, matzos, salt water with eggs (tasted wonderful), macaroons, Passover candy, oodles of nuts from the Officers’ Gal-ley and raisins galore. It was the most wonderful Passover I have ever been to. All the boys were amazed at the feast and they came up all the time during the ceremony and thanked Mr. Fink and me for our work in getting it all together. Now when I go all over the ship every one of the boys all yell hello to me. It is a wonderful feeling to know you have done something to make so many boys feel happy. We had over 130 boys at the seder, both officers and enlisted men . . . . You should have seen their faces. [M]any said they hadn’t seen food like that in six months. They all said they would write home about it.

August 6, 1944
Mother, in the last issue of the newspaper for Jewish boys in service that is put out by Frank Schochet, they had a letter they reprinted which they received from the Brochin boy I met aboard our ship several months ago. He was at the seder and writes in the letter about me.
and the wonderful seder we had aboard this transport. I sure was surprised to see my name in print. Sid, maybe you ran across it in your copy of the paper, which . . . I believe is called The Sentinel.

September 18, 1944
This morning I . . . hurried from the office outside at 10:00 to the starboard side promenade deck, where we were holding Rosh Hashonah services. Lieut. Fink led the services and a soldier was the cantor. The soldier had a tallis and it sure was good to see one. We all had books and read parts of the services. We had only ¾ of an hour for our services but it was worthwhile just to feel that you were participating in the celebration. I could not but help . . . thinking all through the services of the many times our whole family has attended the High Holiday services together at the Adath Jeshuran [sic]. I could see Rabbi Gordon on the pulpit and all the other people in their pews and it sure made me feel good, sitting out there on deck as the sea roared by, thinking that soon we will all be together again in this same synagogue and celebrating again.

JOE BROCHIN I go [into the first sergeant’s tent] and I says, “Sarge, I want to ask a big favor of you. This is [Yom Kippur,] the most important Jewish holiday of the year. I’d like to take the jeep, and I want to take Cohn and Barry to division [for services]. I promise we’ll be back before nightfall. We will make it pretty fast. You don’t have to worry.”

His response is, “There are no fucking Jews in the infantry.” I pulled off my dog tag and lay it down. What do you think he says? “Where did you swipe those?” As if a guy in his right mind would swipe some with an “H” on them! He says, “I think you guys are just turning yellow on us.” I picked up my dog tag, went out. To tell you the truth, I felt like smashing him in the face. . . . The two boys were waiting outside for me. “Well, Joe, how did it go?” I says, “We’re not going to shul this Yom Kippur.”

BERNIE WEITZMAN I had a pretty good bunch. Not many anti-Semitic incidents aboard ship. “You’re different.” I heard that a lot. I said, “I’m different? Do you know any Jews?” “No, but you’re different.” That was the big deal. Pesach or Yom Kippur, of course, the rabbis would say, “If you’re in the service, you can work on Yom Kippur if you have to.” Not like Sandy Koufax missing the World Series.

SAM MALINSKY In Paris we met an old man who was rector of the synagogue. He opened the synagogue . . . the Sefer Torahs [were] under the bimah. . . . We got the Jewish boys in our outfit, and we had Mincha and Ma’ariv. The old guy took over the service.

I [also] met one Jewish civilian, an old man with one tooth, and it flopped around in his mouth. . . . I just bumped into him on the street. . . . I asked him . . . , “Zent dikh Yid?” (Are you Jewish?) And he
said, “Yah.” I had some money . . . I found in a pillbox. . . . He told me he lost his wife and his two daughters, and he was all alone. The poor guy was pathetic. I gave him a big chunk of money.

**DAN HEILICHER journal, Sun. Nov. 5, 1944.** A few weeks ago when I was walking around Paris, I came across the Temple Israelite Synagogue [sic]. It was the famous Rothschild Temple. The front end of it was completely boarded up & I thought the place was closed. I happened to go around to the back of it & and found an open door. Inside I met the cantor. He knew a little English & a little more Hebrew. Between the two languages I could make myself understood. I found out that the Jewish chaplain Major Naditch held services there every Sunday morning, so this morning I went.

Services are held at 10:30 & since I came at 9:30 I again spoke to the cantor & found out a few things. The Temple has been closed for the past 4 years by the Germans & only recently been opened.

The inside is very beautiful, as you can see by the picture postcard. Since many of the windows are boarded up, the inside is quite dark & does not look as nice as it could be.

Even while it was closed, many of the Jews came into the Temple thru a side entrance & prayed in one of the small prayer rooms.

What disappointed me was that none of the old men . . . could speak Hebrew. Here they were studying Talmud or the *sidur* & not being able to understand me. . . . I learned many things from the cantor. He isn’t very old & sings very well. He was at one time in New York & visited Rabbi [Stephen S.] Wise. Most of the [remaining] able-bodied Jews of Paris are either in the French Army [of Liberation] or working in Germany. Now there are very, very few Jews here in Europe who can rebuild their nation. . . . [Their] only escape is Palestine.

**TED PAPERMASTER** On June 4, 1944, Rome was liberated by our forces and in mid-July I and two other officers took a jeep for a three-day furlough to visit that city. One day my friends decided to do some shopping. . . . I offered to sit in the jeep to guard it while they were away. Soon a rather heavy-set Italian lady and her six-year-old clinging son approached me and seemingly attempted to sell me some religious objects. I rejected her advances with ill-disguised annoyance and she finally turned to leave and off-handedly said, “Shalom!” She’s Jewish? Now that woke me up and I warmly invited her back. She spoke no English or Yiddish and I spoke no Italian, yet we somehow communicated. I asked her to wait until my friends returned and then I wanted her to get in the car with her boy and direct me to the Jewish...
ghetto. And so it was, I drove through the entrance and we were suddenly surrounded by a group of children—delighted to see me. I gave them all my chocolate bars and asked to see their synagogue, a beautiful edifice, where I met their melamed [a teacher, usually of small children], a Polish Jew who had gone to France but ended up in Rome. He told me the Italian Jews did not know much about Judaism. He tried to sell me some schoolbooks, which I just could not carry, so I left him a donation. It was a touching visit.

MERLE HILLIARD  I shared my quarters with Jewish officers on each of the three stations I was assigned to. . . . There must have been another record [besides our dog tags with an “H” stamped on them] because the housing officers arranged accordingly. During the period I was overseas, we had High Holiday services at the base hospital that had some Jewish doctors with clout. Each unit commander was instructed to notify the Jewish men in his organization that there was a High Holiday service they could attend. We had about 75 attendees. On Guadalcanal at that time we had over 100,000 men staging for the invasions being planned, so many personnel chose not to attend. The service was interesting. Though we didn’t have a Jewish chaplain, we did have a Cantor. He was a professional singer who told me that he also sang in Catholic mass choirs and Sunrise Services for a Protestant community.

MOE GREEN  The only services I can remember right now that were impressive [were] during holidays, September and October. We were east of Cologne, getting ready to cross the Rhine River. And the colonel came up and said, “Sergeant Green, would you Jews like to celebrate your High Holy Days?” . . . Sure we would. I sent out an announcement to all the companies and told them that if the Jews wanted to be taken off the front long enough to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, they could. We dug in behind a forest, and they had a rabbi come from Paris, France, to Germany, and we celebrated about an hour or hour and a half before we were called back to the front lines. And during the services you blow the shofar 44 times. And we didn’t have a shofar, so somebody shot off an M28 44 times—and that had to do for a shofar. And the rabbi thought that was pretty good.

Ted Papermaster with children in the Rome ghetto, July 1944
On Yom Kippur we were also offered [the chance] to have our services for an hour or two, and we dug in behind a hill where the Germans didn’t know where we were, about 50 or 60 of us. We had a shofar, and he made a blast. We were called right back. We were right between the infantry and field artillery. The Army did everything they could [to provide us with services].

MARVIN SMITH It was Passover in 1942. . . . I was stationed with the 440th SC Battalion in New Guinea. It was a desolate place and very difficult to describe. My company was busy running tel [sic] lines from Port Moreby to the northern tip of the island. I had been in the army only 30 days, and I didn’t know what my job was. . . . The 440th had been training for a year in the states and when they were ordered to sail overseas, they were short fifteen men so the next fifteen men that came to Fort Snelling were immediately assigned to the 440th to bring them to regular strength. . . . I could have been a truck driver, but I didn’t know how to double clutch, so I failed that test. . . . I was sent to the kitchen to perhaps be a cook, and on the first day, I was put in charge of making chocolate pudding . . . but the pudding was burnt, and they chased me out. . . . They couldn’t find a job that I could handle.

Finally, the Catholic Chaplain . . . had a problem. . . . He received a shipment of sacramental wine (kosher l’Pesach). Since I was Jewish, he called me in to his office and asked me to distribute the wine to the Jewish GIs. We had ten cases of bottles the size of 7 Up pop, 20 bottles to the case. What to do? I got on the PA system and announced: “All members of the Jewish faith line up to receive your Passover wine.” Before I knew what was happening, 300 GIs line up! We had only 200 bottles, what to do? I got back on the PA and said: “OK, wise guys, we will have to resort to the supreme test. If you’re not circumcised, you might as well drop out of line right now.” I was surprised to see how many gentiles still qualified. . . . [T]he wine was a Manishevitz [sic] Concord Grape. . . . That night everyone in the company had a taste of Passover wine and toasted General MacArthur who had arranged for the surprise offering.

DAN SHINDER letter to his Aunt Malka, May 18, 1941. Auntie, I saw a great deal of life, from one end of this world to the other. More important is what I learned. I spent last year’s Seder in Manila at the Jewish colony. I looked into the hearts of Jewish refugees who found some sanctuary there. Most impressive of it all, though, is that I am Jewish. Never before did I feel the great communion as I found. No matter where I went there was a synagogue, a rabbi and a Jewish group who were like Ma and Pa and brothers and sisters. In fact, the ties of Judaism are more to be found in out-of-the-way places than in New York. Manila, Java, Borneo, Hawaii; all are closely resembled and truly represented. One of the most treasured memories is the day I helped to build a Sukkah for some Jewish refugee children in a colony outside of Manila. To those children, an American soldier is David himself. Maybe we might have to be him.

Confronting the unexpected

JERRY WEINBERG journal, Saturday, November 25th. Had a taste of turkey for Thanksgiving Day. (Just a taste.) Food getting worse. Not eating very much these days. Got good and drunk Thanksgiving night on bootleg Philippine whisky. Never again. Am still sick. Guess I’m
lucky at that, as a bomb dropped about 75 feet from where I was sleeping and killed eight of the fellows outside. I probably would have been out there.

**MARV JACOBSON** I was still gung-ho, and one of the squadrons [flying out of Maui] needed a replacement. One of their electronic technicians got ill and had to go back home. So they were looking for someone to take his place. Three of us volunteered. We drew straws, and I didn’t win. I really felt bad.

That squadron went on the aircraft carrier, the *USS Lexington*, which got hit by a kamikaze, and the guy [who volunteered] was blinded. After that . . . I no longer volunteered for anything. It could have been me, you know.

**BERNIE WEITZMAN** His name was Manuel Vega Garcia from California. His father was a Castilian from Spain, and his mother was a California Mexican . . . Six foot tall, handsome, spoke several languages—one of the brightest and nicest [people] I ever knew. . . . The story is, we came in on the plane one night after patrol, and his crew took [our plane] up, and they crashed on takeoff . . . killed the entire crew.

Our commanding officer said, “Talk to the chaplain. Get a proper burial, you know.” So . . . I talked to him, a Catholic chaplain. He said, “Well, he never went to church.” I said, “I know he was a good Catholic. There was no church around here. He deserves a Catholic burial.” After two hours of speaking with the chaplain, he never got the Catholic burial. . . . That devastated me and the squadron. We were such good friends. It’s a tough one.
BOB HARRIS letter to his family, April 13, 1945. Today they had mail call, the last, and I didn’t get any; but yesterday I did receive . . . a letter from you, Leah . . . I was shocked at the news of Myron Silver. Just 18 years old and one month overseas. A rotten shame. And he was the youngest and best looking of her whole family. I’ll bet it really hit her hard. How were the memorial services for him? Did all of you go? That was nice of you, calling on them.

TED PAPERMASTER We were both waiting for air transport and both recognized each other as fellow physicians and flight surgeons . . . Capt. Dr. Robert Rehm graduated from the U of Colorado Medical School in 1941, and his wife was also a doctor. He was of medium build, about 5 feet 9 or 10, and wore thick glasses.

In our short visit together he related his major army experiences. Although he was a non-combatant by definition, he chose to fly combat in his B-24 (Liberator) group out of North Africa—an entire 50 mission career occupying every position in the plane except pilot and co-pilot—top turret gunner, belly turret, tail gunner waist gunner, radio man, etc., a feat of unbelievable merit, courage and innovation. I don’t think any other American flight surgeon did anything like this. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, but I doubt he ever received the honor and acclaim he deserved . . . for a significant [but understandably unrecorded] episode.

In his B-24 Bomber group an occasional plane would blow up right after take-off, killing the entire crew. It was mysterious and morale plummeted. The commanders called an organizational meeting to try to deal with this horrendous matter. The flight surgeon [Dr. Rehm] was asked to speak. He came right out to express himself as he saw it: the planes were sabotaged—a statement quite unpopular with the brass.

Well, one mechanic decided to play amateur detective and one day at the call for lunch, this guy stayed on the line and discreetly [sic] observed a man [later confirmed] placing a bomb in the wheel well of one plane so that when the wheels were retracted after take-off, the device would explode. To shorten the story, the culprit was seized by the angry GIs, taken to a field and machine-gunned!
6. Active Duty: Combat

First combat experiences

SAMUEL BRAEMAN  The first three days after you land, you’re scared, you’re huddled together, you’re frightened. You don’t know what’s going to happen. But after about a month, you came [in]to your own and then the training you got back in camp became useful. You knew where the Germans were located by the sound of their guns, even though they muffled their guns up, wrapped them with cloth or something, so you wouldn’t hear exactly where they were coming from.

JULES LEVIN  When we went into combat for the first time, my tank was under the command of Sergeant Tom Reardon, whose home was in Pittsville, Massachusetts. He was a nice person and I was pleased to be a member of his crew. I was the radio operator whose duties also included loading the 76 mm shells into the breech of the “76.” It was also my responsibility to feed the belts of 30 caliber bullets into the machine gun that was also mounted in the turret of the tank. The other weapon carried on our tank was a 50 caliber machine gun, placed outside the tank where the tank commander could easily reach it. This gun was to be used against low flying enemy aircraft, but was largely ineffective. Either the planes were too high, or if they came in at a lower altitude to strafe us, they were too fast. My position was in the interior of the tank’s turret, so for most of that first day I could not witness what was happening on the outside.

[After] we had been in combat only four days, I had already lost two tank commanders, my best army friend was missing and another buddy was killed. The next day I was assigned to my third tank in four days as a gunner.

Jules Levin sitting on his tank, Austria, 1945
Our first move was in the Vosges Mountains of [northeastern] France. In the pitch black of night we replaced, I believe, . . . the 70th Infantry. It was scary, you know—bombs, shelling. In the beginning [you] don’t know when it’s one of our shells going out—’cause it was a whining—or if it’s coming in . . . . When we came in, every time we’d hear a shell, everybody would hit the ground. You learn real quick.

My foxhole buddy was a guy named John Larson, a tall, good-looking all-state basketball player from [Forest Lake,] Minnesota. . . . He was about six foot two, very strong, and a lot of times on forced marches and stuff like that, I would almost collapse, and he’d take my pack and help out. In any event, it was December 5, 1944. We had had a quiet day all day . . . . Usually, whenever we’d stop, we’d dig a deep hole, and we’d get in . . . . But this time, we hadn’t had any combat all day. There hadn’t been any shelling. This was on a hillside, heavily forested. So we dug a hole, but it was very shallow, seven or eight inches, and, ah, nothing’s going to happen. Then we made arrangements with the fellow next door, so instead of sleeping two hours and standing on guard two hours, which you’d do, we were able to sleep three and stand one . . . . John Miner was the guy in the next hole. It so happens that it was pitch black, and John was standing guard, and John Larson and I were asleep in our hole. I was with my back in his stomach when the Germans started to shell the hill. I don’t know what time it was, but it was close to midnight. They had such sensitive shells that if they hit something, they would explode . . . . [A] shell hit in the tree above us and showered down. It ripped my jacket open and tore [Larson’s] stomach open. Myself and Miner helped him down to the first aid station down the hill, and he kept telling us about his million-dollar wound. He was going home now and get out of this shit. He died Christmas Day . . . .

I was in combat till the war ended. I started out a PFC and ended up being a platoon leader. That is, three stripes up—it’s a tech sergeant. Do you know why? Because the other guys would be wounded or killed, and then the experienced ones would move up.

Joe Garellick In November [1944, on our first mission,] . . . not one machine gun worked. Why? You know, before you take off, you’d oil up the guns. Ooooh, they’re going to work good. But up there it was 60, 70 below, and the oil . . . got sticky. The guns wouldn’t go . . . . They didn’t tell us! We never put oil in after that. We used to wipe them as dry as we could get them . . . [and then] they started to work.
Then when you had to go to the bathroom . . . they had a relief tube . . . [that] came out the side of the plane. And everybody would go, not realizing that the urine would follow the fuselage of the airplane. Did you ever see a station wagon here in wintertime when the back window is so dirty? Well, all the urine wound up on the tail-turret windshield, about an inch thick, and you couldn’t see. . . . So we used to go out in the bomb bay. You know how a garage door works—it goes up [on] a track. Well, the bomb-bay doors on a B-24 slide up on a track like that. The urine froze over the track. We got over a town, and they let the bombs go. But the doors [on our plane didn’t] open . . . frozen [shut]. We heard a racket. I thought sure as hell we got hit. But what happened is the doors got knocked off, and they were swinging until they broke off. . . . They should have tipped us off. . . . We had to pee in [our] helmets. When [the urine froze] solid . . . we knocked it out and kicked it out of the plane.

[One thing] we were told about [was] flak. When you see flak come up and it bursts, in a second it becomes black smoke. Then it’s safe to go through it. But if you’re close to it and you see it when it bursts, it’s orange—the explosion is right there! Then it depends how far away it exploded. There’s a low-velocity flak and a high-velocity . . . If low, the pieces come flying slower and don’t rip through so much. If it’s close, it can do an awful lot of damage. One time we had 32 holes, and you could put your head through them. . . . We seemed to handle [combat] pretty good, but . . . you could throw up [when you saw our planes going down].

**HAROLD SPECKTOR** You never really know where you’re at or what’s going on. . . . I sat down by a tree, and I kept hearing a popping sound. It dawned on me the popping sounds are bullets going by. It’s a little sonic boom from the bullet passing you. We could hear the firing of the machine guns. We could hear the mortars as they put them in their tubes. We could hear them coming in. There were always five that were put in the tube. Four would go off,
and the fifth was a dud. Then we started getting tree bursts, so we moved into a clearing. ‘Cause in a tree burst the shell hits the tree, and there’s no protection. It goes all over. So we moved into a clearing, and we dug foxholes. . . . This was February 20, so you didn’t dig a [real] foxhole, just a slit so you were below the surface of the ground. So anything hitting the ground would spray over you instead of into you. We found out later that our platoon sergeant was killed.

JERRY SINYKIN We started moving. We didn’t know which way we were going. The [officers] didn’t know either, by the way, because the whole American Army was in a big turmoil at that point. Bastogne was surrounded but not taken. We finally wound up in our first combat zone, a place called Neufchâteau [, Belgium] . . . . Now I’ve seen dead people—German soldiers lying on the ground. I’ve seen strafing. I’ve heard artillery, lots of noise. We’re at war. . . . My first night, my boss, Stinky Stein (a Jewish boy from New York whose family was somehow connected with one of the bigger nightclubs—the 21 or Stork Club), . . . told me to take a truckload of ammunition and water and gasoline up to the infantry battalion. . . . And he said, “Don’t worry. The Germans are on the other side of the river.” I had . . . a little overlay map [and] these big vehicles carrying gas, oil, ammunition, and so forth, and something called a tank-recovery vehicle . . . really a tank but with big arms . . . so it could recover other broken vehicles.

The first thing I came to was a bridge. . . . Over by the bridge I see a couple of soldiers in a foxhole, and I asked them where the 63rd Infantry was. . . . “Beats us, haven’t the faintest idea. The Germans are down the road a ways.” I went down the road a little ways and finally found the 63rd. . . . Found my commanding colonel, who wanted to know if I had the gas and ammo truck and then asked me the really important question: Did we have any booze? That’s sort of the sine qua non of how the war went for the next few months. Most of the time, from where I stand now, of course, we had a downhill fight. The war was [almost] over. We’d won. We’d beaten them. But for an individual, it doesn’t make any difference. Up until the time we crossed the Rhine, the fighting was very tough, and an awful lot of my friends got wounded and killed.

LEON FRANKEL [I remember my first combat mission] vividly. First, one of our task forces sailed from Ulithi [atoll in the western Pacific,] and I knew it was a huge operation. . . . [T]hey were going to have an invasion of Iwo Jima. I thought this was great. We’re going to go up and have a real cushy mission. Go up and start dropping bombs on some little island. . . . Marines are going to take it, and that’s going to be our first one. . . . After a couple days at sea . . . the commanding officer of the air group, Phil Torrey, announced to us that we were on our way to Tokyo. There was a hoot and a holler. Everybody let go. It was the first Navy raid on Tokyo since Doolittle went up there in 1942, which was an Army [Air Corps] raid.

The whole mission was to neutralize as much of Japan’s air force as we could before the invasion of Iwo Jima. . . . The first launches were fighter sweeps, then they sent the bombers off. That’s us. Our target was the Nakijima Aircraft Factory at Ota, Japan, which is about [fifty miles northeast] of Tokyo, along the Tonî River. We crossed over Japan. I saw Mount Fuji in the distance. Sort of looked like California; it was beautiful and green. We’d been at sea for a long time and this was the first time I’d ever seen—it was kind of exciting.

The torpedo squadron was the base formation. Everybody forms around it. The dive bombers were behind us, the fighters take up their positions above and in back. We led the
We led the strike. As we headed in toward our target, we got jumped by about forty or fifty fighters. I saw my first airplane being shot down. Then our fighters got behind the Japanese fighter there, and I see smoke streaming off the Japanese fighter and they went right past me. I’m looking out there and I was like a guy seeing a deer for the first time. I’m just fascinated by the whole thing. . . . I see these two airplanes making straight for the deck. Blue one [American] in back and a red one [Japanese] in front. All of a sudden, smoke is coming off the red one, and the blue one makes a gentle pull up and this guy, like five hundred miles an hour, smacks into the ground. And flak is exploding all around us. They were shooting. They had anti-aircraft guns protecting this factory. The flak had multi-colored explosions, so each battery could probably track its own shells. So there were red and blue and green and yellow explosions all over.

It was almost surreal. Actually, it was just like it wasn’t happening. It was like I’m watching a movie. . . . I’m outside of this action and saying, “Oh my God, if they’re all like this, I’m not going to make it. Holy gee!” The factory was enormous. I’d never seen anything so huge in my life. It must have covered hundreds of acres. . . . We started our breakup at about 15,000 feet and 18,000 feet, and picked out one of the buildings as a target. We were carrying 250-pound bombs . . . ten of them. . . . [T]hey were set in a sequence . . . so when you pushed the release all the bombs would go, but they would strike the ground at different intervals. These also had delays, so they didn’t explode immediately. . . . [T]he idea was to penetrate the roofs of the factories and explode on the inside. The roofs were corrugated metal, so it worked out just great. We put the factory completely out of commission.
[Our] rendezvous point was across the Toni River. . . . If we got separated, we were all supposed to join up there. . . . In the meantime, the fighters are pouring in. My gunner is shooting at them. Everybody is yelling, and planes are getting knocked down all over the place. A Japanese fighter dove underneath my skipper’s airplane and smacked right into his propeller with his wing. The Japanese fighter lost his wing and went spinning crazily into the ground. I didn’t know it was the skipper at the time. I saw what was happening, so I pulled alongside the plane. Then I see it’s our commanding officer, and two of his blades of his prop are bent out like bananas. But it was still flying. He could still do about 1,400 RPM, barely keep it chugging along. I pulled over alongside of him, and I throttled back and I dragged my feet. I did everything to slow down. In the meantime, we were fending off attacks. I herded him out to sea and back to the ship, and he put me in for the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross] on my first mission.

**Invading Normandy**

**JOE BROCHIN** The night of June 6, 1944, I had the radio on, and all of a sudden I hear this tumult coming from Normandy. Well, behind me was the officers’ quarters, and I ran out and I woke up a bunch of these fellows, and I told them, ”The big deal is on right now. If you want to hear it, come on, but I only got room for about 20 guys.” They passed it on, and you couldn’t have packed toothpaste into that dispensary. We heard the screams of the wounded and the orders being shouted for this and that and, of course, the mistakes that were being made in the landing. They should never have landed in that weather. The Germans were just mowing them down from shore . . . and their tragedy was felt by us all the way to the island of New Caledonia.

Of course, these fellows stayed there throughout the night. They couldn’t believe that we in the South Pacific, we’re hearing every bit of what’s going on over there and the horrendous casualties [we’re] taking. As I say, June 6, 1944, will always stay in my mind.

**MOE GREEN** We were in the English Channel about three days but couldn’t invade until June 6. We had about 1,250 guys in our outfit. We got [to] Utah Beach June 6 and headed east from there. We had no training for the invasion. [The transport] didn’t have either a Protestant or Catholic minister to give the prayers, but there was a rabbi. And this rabbi gave all the Jews prayers every day for the two or three days we waited in the English Channel to invade France. After he was through with the Jewish prayers, he would conduct the Catholic or Protestant prayers.
SAM MALINSKY  An awful lot of boys got killed [on Omaha Beach on D-Day], good buddies of mine. We’d try to help each other all the way. It was frightening . . . a lot of enemy fire. There was a little rise, and what we’d do was try to stay behind any rise. We got to a woods, and the first thing we saw was a soldier of the 83rd Infantry whose throat was slit from ear to ear. . . . The Germans were bastards [who] booby-trapped their own dead. . . . That’s the way they fought.

KENNETH BENDER  The trip from Wales to France [on D-Day Plus 1] took a few hours. Several hundred yards from Omaha Beach, members of Company B went over the side of the larger boat transport and slid down rope ladders onto a landing craft. . . . Our 200 plus men and officers were all on this boat when it was headed for shore. This was the entire Company B. We moved closer and closer . . . with the waves rocking us [as] the boat moved slowly towards the beach. The Air Corps was very active overhead. Artillery fire roared, and we heard the shells hit the beach area. There was also overhead fire from our navy ships. . . .

About 40 yards from shore our landing craft stopped. I followed the slogan of the Infantry School, which was “Follow me!” I yelled this loudly as I jumped over the side. . . . I was the first to hit the water. . . . I immediately recognized a major problem . . . the water went almost to my neck and I was six feet tall. I knew that I had men in the company who were much shorter. I yelled to the Navy Ensign officer above the roar of the artillery fire from the battleship and the overhead aircraft, “Move the boat closer to the beach.” He yelled back, “This is as far as I’m going to go!” I shouted, “You better get closer to the shore or some of my men will drown!” The Ensign did not respond, so I yelled back to him, “If you don’t move closer, I will have the men shoot you.” I heard the engine start up and the Ensign started to move the boat closer to shore. Boudra, my runner, and I in the water moved towards the beach. Every one of Company B made it to the beach. . . .

By the afternoon of June 14, 1944, it appeared that the enemy resistance was less and on orders from me, the company advanced more rapidly. After a 2–3 mile advance, B Company arrived at the outskirts of the French village of St. George d’Elle. After several skirmishes with the enemy . . . I sent a runner to determine the location of the other companies. . . . No contact could be made. The other companies had not kept up as they had been ordered to do. I radioed back to Colonel Mildren to indicate our location. . . . After checking the map, [he] said, “You’re surrounded. Enemy troops are between B Company and the rest of the battalion. If you want to surrender, that’s fine, because it’s doubtful you can make it back and all of you will be killed.” I said, “Colonel, we will make it back.”

I . . . called the platoon leaders, lieutenants together from the sunken road where we were situated. Upon darkness . . . [we] would start to the rear. Everyone would remove his steel helmet and would carry it, so the enemy would have more difficulty in identifying us as enemy troops. Even in the darkness, the silhouettes of the American helmets were different from the German. B Company would advance to the rear in a column of twos. Sergeant Paul Skurman, who could speak German fluently [he was born in Germany], along with the automatic rifleman and I with my compass would direct the retreat. After darkness the advance to the rear began. Talking was in whispers. Men walked slowly.
Kenneth Bender being awarded a Silver Star by General Walter Robinson, July 20, 1944
I saw a German machine gun crew moving their gun up the road where we were located and placing it in position about forty yards from our men. I moved two automatic riflemen up near me and directed their fire on the enemy, putting the gun out of action. . . . [O]n two occasions, the enemy approached us to try to determine if we were friend or foe. Sergeant Skurman took up the conversation in German and with Browning automatics, we eliminated the enemy.

I took many compass readings to make sure the direction was proper. The return was very, very slow. It was not until 7 AM that the advance units of B Company reached 1st Battalion headquarters. It was a long 10 hours. . . .

The following day I wrote up recommendations for bronze stars for gallantry for Skurman, the two automatic riflemen and 1st Sergeant Charlie Poulton, who had carried a wounded member of B Company over his shoulder all the way back. These awards were all approved. In addition, Colonel Mildren recommended me for the Silver Star . . . [, which was awarded to me] on July 20, 1944, by General Walter Robertson.

HARRY FRIEDMAN diary, 6/09/44. To Falmouth, boarded a Liberty Ship, the Frances Drake. Nurses, officers & enlisted men in the hold. Slept with clothes on. Depth charges dropped. 6/10. Ships can be seen as far as telescope can reach. 6/12. Warship in artillery duel with German planes. Nyall and I took charge of the first group of men dropping into LCT [Landing Craft Tank] boats (10 am). Anchor dropped. Waded in water above gas mask pack. Omaha Beach is really smashed. Don’t see how the landings were made. Found couple of wet blankets of dead soldiers & slept wrapped around tree. Plenty of artillery & ack-ack tonight.

SID FELDMAN We went over [from Southampton] 12 days after D-Day. When we finally got [across to France, all the kids were seasick]. . . . We had to crawl down a great big . . . rope ladder [from the big boat] with your 60-, 70-pound duffle bag on your back [and] get into a landing craft. . . .

The beach was already taken. We went right into combat [at] a place called St. Lô. Our 3rd Armored Division had a spot there. It was all zeroed in [so] we lost lots and lots of guys. The first thing that we did was give blood. They needed blood. Whoever wasn’t injured would give blood to the other people. . . .

It’s scary, but you don’t have time to think, you know. Once in a while, you’d see a guy get killed. It bothered you. When we got into . . . fighting the Germans, there they are, 50 yards away, and you see them get killed. It didn’t bother you. They weren’t even human to us. The only time you got sick is when you’d see a GI with his boots sticking out, covered up completely.

[It was rough going], especially with Major General Rose. He was like a Patton, same type of guy . . . a soldier’s soldier, they called him. The fact is, we went through enemy territory . . . 99 miles in one 24-hour period.

If a vehicle broke down, you towed it. [You’re] being towed along at 20, 30 miles per hour, and you’re lying on your side fixing the carburetor. . . . First the artillery went, and then the tanks went, and then the armored vehicles went, and then the half-tracks, and we had to keep fixing the vehicles as they broke down.
**Following orders**

**LIONEL GREENBERG**  We had one mission when whoever was leading our squadron (not our crew) was leading the first wing. He took us over the target three times! Every time you do a 180—we had 100 planes following us—you go lower, and the lower you go, they can hit you with smaller guns. I could see my friends going down in flames. When we got back for debriefing, I gave them a big piece of my mind. . . . I had three drinks on an empty stomach . . . and went in there and told them how crazy they were. Before we left they always said, “If you can’t bomb the primary target, go to the alternate.” That’s what we should’ve done!

They gave our crew leave, and we went into London. I came back, and I [was reassigned to leave the next day] for Italy with the 15th Air Force! We were flying [to Italy via Casablanca] when we heard about D-Day. We knew it was going to come because we had trained. . . . I felt very bad that I missed D-Day.

**LEONARD PARKER**  We had lost our platoon leader, a first lieutenant. . . . Then they sent up a replacement after about three weeks, and this was Lieutenant Hopfan. He was a very mild-looking, short guy, a very nice person, but he had never been in combat before. I was already a veteran. So the first thing that he had to confront was to take the town of Aschaffenburg in Germany. . . . There was a forested area that we were billeted in, and then about 500 yards of meadow, and then a whole line of houses along the edge of the meadow. . . . We go there to reconnoiter the night before, and he said, “Geez, how are we going to get across that meadow without them zeroing in on us?” I said, “They probably will. So we can expect to take some losses. But if we spread out and dah, dah, dah.” And we talked about it.

The next morning, we start out. Always, the platoon sergeant and the platoon leader, who is the commissioned officer, are in the front, you know, waving guys on and spreading them out and so on. We start out across the field and after we get within, I don’t know, 400 or 500 yards, we start picking up small-arms fire. By the time we got within 200 yards of the houses, it was impossible to move. . . . We ended up with just four of us that had started out. Hopfan got killed. So I had two guys . . . my bazooka team and one other guy that hadn’t been hit. Everywhere the guys are calling, “Medic! Medic!” We couldn’t move, ‘cause every time you moved, they would start their small-arms fire. With my shovel I dug, laying flat, a hole. Both these guys, my bazooka team, had been wounded: one in the arm and the other in the butt. The one [with the arm wound] lost a lot of blood, so I dragged him into the hole that I had dug. We lay there all day long. . . . Couldn’t move. After it got dark, I got up and went back to the battalion headquarters and brought a litter team, and we took them both out. . . . So the battle for Aschaffenburg was deadly. We lost practically our whole platoon.
JOE BROCHIN I took a squad out on reconnaissance [in] Jap territory where the grass is six, seven feet tall and something that passes for a road. A regular Army sergeant [had been sent along], not too sharp on the upper story. I tolerated him. The first thing he [does is have] the fellows marching on top of the road, a wonderful silhouette for the Japs in the grass. . . . I says, “Get the guys off the road, Sarge.” . . . He says, “I’m running the show.” I said, “I don’t give a blankety-blank. . . . You’re going to risk seven men’s lives because you’re an asshole. Furthermore, you’re supposed to keep men 15 feet apart. You don’t keep them bunched up like a bunch of bananas.” So he goes ahead. It isn’t seven, eight minutes later, and I hear firing up yonder, and all of a sudden, these guys come running back, breathless. I says, “Now you know what I mean.” [He] didn’t say much.

Another [time] we’re on a reconnaissance. I ask Sarge, “How come you’re picking me every day to take a squad out there? Hey, there’s other guys can handle it.” He says, “Yes, but according to your record, you took some courses in map reading,” which was true. These fellows didn’t know a map from a candy wrapper. . . . We were about four miles into Jap territory. My heart tells me it’s too quiet. I look at the palm trees, not moving . . . the tall grass isn’t moving. Nothing. . . . I tell the bar [Browning automatic rifleman], “Now listen. What do you see out there in that clump of bushes?” “Oh,” he says, “there must be something there that’s moving around.” “You bet . . . we’re about 100 yards from them. When we get 50 yards, give that clump a good burst.” This sergeant starts saying, “I’m giving orders around here.” I says, “I don’t give a fuck who’s giving orders. I’m not going to risk these guys.” We get closer. I slap [the rifleman] on the back. “Okay. Another burst. Go ahead.” Then I says to the regular Army Sarge, “Come on, you’re coming with me, hero.” He says, “I’m giving orders.” I says, “You’re coming with me,” and I put my rifle on his front. “Oh boy, am I going to have you court martialed,” [he says.] Big deal, you know. Anyhow, he finally decides to go with me. What do we find there? Three dead Japs. They had set up a perfect ambush. No kopf!
LEON FRANKEL  The *Yorktown* was hit [by kamikazes]. The pilots were supposed to disperse in the ship, because they didn’t want us all together. My part of the ship was in the wardroom, which was maybe two or three decks down. . . . [So w]hen we were under attack, our job was to disperse. . . . We knew how close the kamikaze was by the sound of the guns that were being fired. When he was off a long ways, the five-inch guns would be shooting, the main battery. When he got closer, then the forty millimeters would start. . . . Then when he got on top of you, the twenties would start going. You could hear the guns, so everybody would dive under the tables. I got tired of that, so this one day I went up on the flight deck during a kamikaze attack. We were attacked every day. Day and night. . . . So I went up on deck and I saw four kamikazes coming down. One of them hit the *Intrepid*. . . . I watched him go right into it. I went down to the wardroom to report to my skipper [that] the *Intrepid* just took a “zoot suiter,” we used to call them, because the Japanese [pilots] dressed up in ceremonial costumes. So I was [down] there when the second attack came in and the guy hit the side of our ship, *Yorktown*, and killed a lot of sailors. I was fortunate. There were a lot of carriers hit. . . . Every other day we were making raids on Japanese airfields there, trying to knock out as many airplanes as we could. But they had hundreds of them. Hundreds of volunteers. That particular day, as I say, we got hit, but it didn’t put us out of commission.

*Improvising in the air*  

MARK HERTZ  To form the formation we used a [flare] gun, like a 44-caliber pistol, but it shoots flares. The B-17 was furnished with a small glass turret, and the pilot could open up a glass door and the [turret gunner] would operate the [flare] gun. Our flight briefing happened at 1 AM, and then around 6 AM we would take off. We would go above the field and circle constantly counterclockwise. . . . [When] we would see another plane, the turret gunner would open his little glass door and fire [some flares]. . . . We had different color combinations, for example, brown and green, or orange and yellow, and he would fire the flares—and each group had its own color assignment. So when you saw another plane firing your same colors, you would join that group of planes for combat formation. . . . Planes were [also] numbered, so you knew your order of planes.

JOE GARELICK  In a B-24 . . . you never knew when the front wheel was going to collapse and the plane would be on its nose, and whoever was in the front would be seriously hurt. So the thing was, if you’re landing, get out of the nose. So my ball-turret gunner [, Cecil, is] in the turret [in the nose of the plane]. . . . The two guns are sticking out . . . with the plane behind. If you turned the turret one way, the guns are [facing the other way], but his door to get out of the turret [is lined up with] the outside of the airplane. Now, he can’t get out. I hear [Cecil on the intercom, calling] the pilot. “Bob, my turret is stuck.” Bob sends the co-pilot down and the navigator down there and the engineer. All three of them are monkeying around, and they can’t get him out.

This I did—I remember it plain as day: “What’s the matter, Cecil? What did you call them for? Why didn’t you call Joe? You know Joe is going to get you out.” He said, “You really mean that, Joe?” I said, “I’ll be up there in a little while, and I’ll get you out.”

I’m working on my machine gun, and I pull out the barrel. The barrel is a piece of steel that’s 27 inches long, round, you know [like] a crowbar. I knew exactly what to do with that
piece of steel. So I call him up. I says, “Cecil, I’m coming up there,” and I take and unhook myself from the oxygen. We have a little walk-around bottle [of oxygen] that we can hook onto. I disconnect myself from the intercom, but I take my parachute with ‘cause I’ve got to go through the catwalk on the bomb bay, and I’m not going to go through there without [the parachute,] just in case. I get behind him and I says, “Cecil, I’m right behind you, and I’m going to get you out.” On the bottom of the turret it’s like a big washtub, a lot of aluminum. I took that [machine-gun] barrel, and I busted up that aluminum. Inside . . . the pulleys and the cables got hit by flak, so it jammed up the turret. But when I busted it all loose, I pulled him sideways and got him out. Well, I saved him.

[On another mission, to bomb the refineries in Magdeburg, Germany, flak took out two engines,] and we dropped from 21,000 feet to 9,000. The group left us already. We were alone. You know, fighters can jump on a single airplane really easy and knock you out. We managed to go for a little ways . . . [but the flak had also hit the pilot’s steering mechanism.] He asked the crew, “Let’s vote on this: do you want to try make it across the Channel?” I worried about my mother, when she’d get a telegram saying her son was missing in action. So we said, “Let’s try it.” . . . The copilot laid on the airplane floor, watching the mechanism, to help the pilot steer. We landed at an airbase in England, close to the beach. A truck came and got us. The plane would take months to fix . . . When I got back, my brother [, who was stationed in
London,] was on the phone. It was two o’clock in the morning: “We got word you were missing in action.”

JACK MARSH (undated clipping from a Santa Ana, California, newspaper)

A bomb did not get released, although the bomb bay doors were open. [The bomb would have exploded when the plane landed.] Marsh let himself down into the open bay, having another crew member hold his feet. Using pliers, he slowly and carefully worked [the bomb] loose while the plane was thousands of feet over the Straits of Messina. He received a Distinguished Flying Cross for this heroic act.


Nov. 9, 1943, is a date I’ll never forget. And I’m sure that the rest of my buddies who made up the crew of that PV-1 Vega Ventura patrol plane and a certain Army chaplain have no problems remembering, either.

The day started with a routine air patrol over the Atlantic in search of German submarines. We were assigned to Navy Bombing Squadron 131 and had taken off that morning from Zandery Field, Dutch Guiana (now Surinam), an air base we Navy types shared with the Army Air Corps.

We had been patrolling for five hours before setting a course for Atkinson Field, British Guiana, for refueling. When I say “we,” I refer to pilot Lt. j.g. John Powers, co-pilot Ensign Joseph Greene, Aviation Machinist’s Mate 1st Class Luther McPherson, mechanic; Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Donald “Punchy” West; and yours truly, Weitzman, as radioman.

While our aircraft was being serviced at Atkinson Field, we met Father Francis Waterstraat, a chaplain with the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was looking for a ride to Zandery Field, our home base, to minister to the troops there. He explained to us that his parish included most of the north coast of South America, but he had no transportation to take him on his appointed rounds. Consequently, he had to hitch rides on any aircraft available. . . .

The patrol started out routinely. Then we spotted an enemy submarine crash diving. The sub had spotted us before we could attack. I radioed our base, reporting enemy contact and our position. Orders came back, “Remain on station until relieved.” Our relief was a PBY Catalina patrol plane lumbering our way at 110 knots from Naval Air Station Trinidad.

We shadowed the sub for four hours, until our fuel situation became critical. By the time our relief arrived, we had just enough fuel to get back to Zandery Field without any reserve. Our flight back to Zandery was uneventful until we began our approach to the airfield. It was 6 p.m. A tropical rainstorm greeted us and due to dense fog and rain, we couldn’t see a thing and our fuel had run out. It was going to be impossible to land since there were no sophisticated electronic landing aids to guide us in. The jungle was below and the coastline was 20 miles to the north.
The voice of our pilot, Powers, came over the intercom, “We can bail out over the jungle or we can land at sea. The choice is yours.” Some choice. But we had to give our captain an immediate answer, and all of us, including Waterstraat, agreed, “Let’s try it at sea.” Powers banked the aircraft and we headed out to sea and a crash landing.

Waterstraat asked, “Are there any Catholics aboard?” Punchy West told him, “Father, you are the only Catholic aboard.” I sincerely believe this made him pray more diligently for our safety. In light of later events, I must admit the chaplain did good work.

The choice to ditch at sea was easy. If we had jumped out over the jungle and our parachutes opened in time, we might find ourselves hung up in trees that reached 60 feet and higher above the jungle floor. Even if we did make it safely to the ground, our chances of finding each other in the dense jungle were nil. This, after all, was the same area where Frank Buck, the famed explorer in the 1920s and 1930s, gave up and returned to civilization without any meaningful exploration.

If our crew had been paying attention during survival drills, we would have an excellent chance of launching the life raft and staying afloat until rescued. We’d soon find out. My responsibility as radioman made it necessary to send out our present position and where we hoped to ditch at sea. Voice communication was out because of the weather and the distance from base. I sent the message in Morse Code and, luckily, it was received at Zandery Field.

Landing at sea, especially in a land plane, presents a number of problems that are difficult to comprehend unless you have experienced them. We had to jettison all loose gear on board, along with the pilot’s canopy; drop our depth charges; destroy the IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) code box; and fasten our seat belts and brace for impact.

Powers, who had never ditched a plane before in his life, made a beautiful landing under horrible conditions: inky black night, heavy rain and gusty winds. We touched down gently enough but the plane skipped some distance before losing air speed, settling into the sea in a Niagara of water spray that inundated the cockpit.

We had to act fast! The plane was going to sink, and none of us wanted to go to the bottom with it. Our training did pay off. Co-pilot Greene and mechanic McPherson were able to launch the life raft on one side of the plane while the rest of us, including the hitchhiking chaplain, were on the other side of the plane keeping afloat in our Mae Wests. We were all out of the plane in time to see it sink below the surface. The time elapsed from landing until the plane disappeared was about 20 seconds.

At first, it seemed that our situation was not good. The howling
wind and blackness prevented the rest of us from making contact with Greene and McPherson in the raft. And in the confusion of the moment, we weren’t sure in which direction we had to swim to reach shore. We soon realized that we had landed at the mouth of a river, which may not have been so fortunate had the tide been going out. But, a “force” must have been with us, for the tide was coming in and slowly carrying us along with it.

Waterstraat presented a problem. He said, “I can’t swim. You fellows go on and let me make it by myself.” This didn’t make any sense to the rest of us and we surely didn’t want to lose our “father,” whose prayers had done well for us so far. So, we took off our belts and fashioned a rope to keep him close to us. Thus, with the chaplain in tow we set out for one of the banks of the river.

We were making good progress when I suddenly felt something bump against my thigh. I asked Powers if he had kicked me. He replied in the negative and queried if I had just kicked him. Following a nervous gulp, I said, “No.” At this, as if on cue, we both cried out, “Oh-oh!” We weren’t the only ones swimming in these parts. But whatever it was decided to leave us alone.

At about 2 a.m., after eight hours in the water, we felt mud underfoot. We’d made it to one of the river banks. Although our landfall was in a swamp and not all that solid, it was still land. While [we were] sitting in the muck, going over our good fortune, insects began to attack us ferociously. Our Navy vocabulary was soon put to the test and we passed with flying colors. The air turned blue from our tirade against the foe. Meanwhile, Waterstraat pretended to be asleep, not hearing a word we uttered. He had to be a saint to put up with our verbal assaults.
Just before daybreak, we heard voices in the distance. As darkness gave way to dawn, we spotted a group of natives getting out of their boat that had been grounded by the outgoing tide. They were fishermen from a nearby village who caught fish by constructing long net fences parallel to the shoreline. When the tide came in, the fish came in. When the tide went out, the fish were caught in the netting. I can imagine their surprise when they realized that the tide had brought in more than fish on this occasion.

Using a mudsled, the natives picked us up and returned us to their boat, where we were served a breakfast of fish and tea prepared over a fire built in the aft end of their boat. All of us ate ravenously of the fish, with the exception of Waterstraat, who was a bit concerned about the sanitary conditions aboard our rescuers’ seagoing cafe. But, when he saw how much we were enjoying the repast, he gave in to a growling stomach and joined us.

About 10 a.m. a Navy blimp spotted us and approached, using a bullhorn to ask about our condition. I signaled by semaphore that we were okay but that two of our crew were missing. They answered not to worry and that we would be picked up in a short time.

Two hours later, a Grumman Duck amphibious plane, piloted by Army Major Art Williams, famous for conducting daring rescues of airmen at sea and along jungle rivers, landed to pick us up. We weren’t sure what had happened to Greene and McPherson, which gave us considerable concern. But Williams allayed our fears by informing us that another search plane had spotted them on the other side of the river. With this good news, Williams taxied his plane to the other side and picked up the two men.

Greene and McPherson had been spotted earlier that morning by an aircraft of our squadron out searching for us. But our joy at being rescued was darkened by news that, while making a steep turn at low air speed, the rescue plane plunged into the sea, killing all on board.

Flying back out over the sea en route to Zandery Field, I looked down and noticed a number of dorsal fins slicing through the water. I couldn’t help but wonder if, on the previous night, the deadly owner of one of those fins hadn’t bumped against Powers and me.

On returning to base, the guys in the radio shack who picked up my distress transmission prior to our ditching kidded me by asking, “Bernie, we received your message, but why was your fist so shaky?” I didn’t take offense. We had been rescued and that was good enough for me.

SIG LIEBFELD’S HEROISM (as told by Morris Counts)  I was the nose gunner and assistant flight engineer on 1st Lt. Liebfeld’s crew and this is what I remember about the mission:

Over southern Germany the plane was hit by flak before we reached the target [Stuttgart]. We lost two engines instantly and the third was lost a short time later. The exploding shells also injured our radio operator, Peter Perhach. Tail gunner Robert Schroeder was also injured when he was blown completely out of the tail turret. While maintaining control of our damaged aircraft, 1st Lt. Liebfeld raised our morale by chiding Sgt. Schroeder: “Bob, what are you doing back there? Don’t worry, we’ll cover for you, and you will be a hero yet!”

With only one good engine, leaking fuel and damaged flight controls, 1st Lt. Liebfeld knew we could not stay up with the formation headed to the primary target, so he ordered the Bombardier to drop on a target of opportunity. Our Bombardier, Frank Mercado, was able to locate a bridge on which to drop our bomb load. During this time I was busy shutting off and re-routing leaking fuel lines.

After dropping our bomb load and turning for home I had started feeling a little better
about our situation. Then the Pilot reported that the bomb bay doors would not close. Chester Carr, our Flight Engineer, and I looked into the bomb bay and saw that one bomb had not released. One end was hanging down because one of the two attachments had not released. Working in coordination, we were able to release the bomb from the rack. Chester used his back to lift the bomb just enough so that I could remove the stuck retaining pin.

Along the way home we threw out everything we could to lighten the plane in an effort to preserve altitude and fuel. Somehow 1st Lt. Liebfeld and Co-Pilot John Guion were able to keep our battered B-24 in the air and on course for England while our little friends the P-51s and P-47s provided protection from enemy fighters. At some point the pilots knew that at the rate the plane was losing altitude it would be impossible to reach our base. The best we could do would be to reach the English coast.

[By the time] the plane reached the English coast we had lost a lot of altitude. We were running out of time and options and we all knew it, but 1st Lt. Liebfeld made some quick decisions. He contacted the RAF and Air Sea Rescue to inform them that he was taking the plane over the coast just far enough to allow the crew to bail out. Then he would take the plane back over the Channel before bailing out so the plane would crash in the water, preventing possible civilian casualties on the ground.

At the pilot’s signal we bailed out. I came down in a hops field, my parachute in front, dragging me over the wires supporting the hops. When I finally got stopped by the wires my feet were about six inches off the ground. By the time I got out of my parachute harness and got my feet on the ground I could see British civilians with shotguns moving towards me. At first they were not sure if I was an enemy or an ally. I assured them that I was an American Airman stationed at Metfield. They called the police, who took me to an RAF base, where I was reunited with one of my crewmates. We were there a few days while the RAF checked out our identities and processed the paper work required to return us to Metfield. The RAF treated us well. I enjoyed the good meals that the British Service Women prepared, knowing that soon I would be back eating in the “Mess” hall in Metfield.

**Official Summary:** 491st Aircraft Lost 4—In the final loss of the day nine men abandoned B-24 (42-51218) over the coast of England. Pilot 1st Lt. Sig Liebfeld had brought a badly battered B-24 and his injured crew a long way out of Southern Germany in an attempt to get home. He alone did not survive—he drowned in the English Channel approximately 200 yards from safety. RAF pilots reported that he brought the plane in across the coast to allow the crew to bail out. He then turned 180 degrees to allow the stricken B-24 to dive into the Channel to avoid casualties on the ground. By then he had lost altitude and didn’t have time for his chute to fully open.

Prior to this mission, 1st Lt. Liebfeld had said, “You fellows stay with me, I’ll always get you home!” It was hard accepting the fact that he alone had not survived. 1st Lt. Liebfeld was awarded the Silver Star posthumously. The [r]est of the crew [were] awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses.
**HARRY FRIEDMAN** diary, July 25 [1944]. Couple thousand planes passed. By accident the 30th Division got hell blasted out of them. 45 of the first 42 patients admitted by me were from the 30th. Sept. 28. Strafed this A.M. Our operating room nurse Aggie Raus shot through clavicle and wrist. Oct. 17. Plenty muddy. Better to sleep in hospital tent than cross through mud to our own. Dec. 20. May have to leave Bardenberg [, Germany, ] in a hurry. Rumors plentiful. One Evac hosp. got out without its equipment. The Colonel prepared us to leave under any condition—walk if necessary. The Germans are pushing hard. Big counter-offensive.

**BOB HARRIS** letters to his family, May 7, 1945. Tonight we’re taking on a number of hospital corpsmen to take care of the terrific number of wounded men that we’ll load up with tomorrow. . . . [T]hey say it will be the largest number of wounded we’ve ever carried. May 8, 1945. We have picked up a large number of casualties, wounded and injured. Many mental cases too. We have Army, Navy, Marine, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine. The other day we were loading patients by lifting them out of boats alongside of ours on a box-like platform onto which the stretcher cases were loaded. . . .

Aboard now we have many men for whom the war will never be over with. They are badly maimed and wounded. Many have bad skin diseases. We took aboard as many hospital cases as we could handle and put the traveling Army officers down in troop class compartments. Patients deserve and rate No. 1 priority on this ship. I’ve got about 80 more people aboard to help care for the wounded—among them are several Jewish doctors. One of the Jewish docs has charge of the Mental Wards and comes up to see me often to help him get this and that for his patients.

**HAROLD ARENSON** All of a sudden, a bunch of young recruits is coming up and the shells started coming in. I grabbed one of the recruits, and we dived down alongside the wall. We waited there while all these shells came in. The Germans were pretty sneaky about it. There was a lull in the shelling, so we made the mistake of standing up. That’s when the shell came and hit right above our heads. It threw me about 20 feet into the street. I don’t know what happened to the other fellow. The wall collapsed. The whole wall collapsed. . . . The lieutenant came along at that time, and he loaded me into a jeep and took me to an aid station. From the aid station they took me back in Belgium somewhere. There was a great big Quonset hut . . . with about 20 operating tables. They cut all your clothes off and then take some of the shrapnel out. . . . It was the first time they started using sodium pentothal. . . . [T]hey inject it and boy you’re out, just like that. . . .

[I was injured] all over my back and arms. They gave me a couple pints of blood at the aid station. Then they put us in an ambulance and took us to Liége, Belgium, and from Liége, we flew to London.
I was in the hospital about three months. . . . This was the year of the buzz bombs. . . . The Germans would load their bombs into a device, like an airplane, but there was no pilot—like a drone, but they had no target. As soon as it ran out of gas, it came down. It was destroying a lot of England. I’d hear it over the hospital, hoping that the thing would pass on by.

LEONARD PARKER  I was in combat, in actual combat, for over eight months. The [first] time [I was almost wounded,] I was with John Larson. . . . The other time, this was in Nuremberg, it was house-to-house fighting. There was a big house at a “T” in the road. I was running up the stairs, and the Germans . . . shot my canteen. My squad thought I got hit. . . . When I got to the top of the stairs, I reached to take my canteen to get a drink of water and cut my finger badly. I still have the nerve thing . . . that’s the biggest wound I had.

[But] I was sent back twice for what they called “battle fatigue,” for three days’ rest. . . . I was behaving erratically. . . . I really wasn’t aware of it. The lieutenant said, “Go back and have a rest for a few days.” So I did. It was nice to be out of that crap, ’cause you’re constantly in fear. I’ll tell you, it’s terrible. You’re constantly concerned and worried and seeing guys get shot up in all kinds of crazy ways.

JOE BROCHIN  They woke me up around 11 o’clock at night. I pick up some ammunition clips. . . . [Sarge] puts me and Cohn, the optometrist, [on perimeter defense, and] . . . we could hear the chatter of the Japanese on the other side of the creek. . . . [Then] all hell broke loose. They’re firing something we didn’t have. . . . We used to call it “the woodpecker” that could fire 25-caliber bullets, and you had another man feeding the bullets into it. It was on a copper plate. It’s devastating at close range. They’d pick it up and move, you know, 10 yards [this way] or 10 yards that way, so you’d never know where it’s coming from. Finally, I ran out of ammunition, and I yell to some guys, “Throw me a few clips.” When I got up, the firing had subsided ’cause chances are they were low on ammunition, too. Then, all of a sudden,
that machine gun opens up on me. . . . I go end over teakettle into the foxhole there. Harvey is going to go out to get a litter squad. I says, “You go out of the foxhole, and I’ll put a bullet in you. You’re not going anywhere. Just put a tourniquet around my femur here, will you? They’ll be quieting down. There’s enough firing coming from the guys behind us to keep them down.” Finally, it did subside, and Harvey ran out and got a litter squad, got me out. They bring me into the battalion aid station, and there was an American doctor there. There’s a Jap wounded on this side of me and a Jap wounded on that side of me. The medic there says, “Doc, I’m going to give him an injection,” which was a plasma injection. We didn’t use blood. . . . So the doc says, “Don’t waste it on him. He’s too far gone.” Anyhow, the medic went ahead and jabbed me with the needle. . . . I was thankful he had more brains than the doctor. . . .

As it got light, barely daylight, we had . . . an ambulance jeep, and you could put one litter on top and two on the bottom. The ground was muddy as hell, so they had to put chains in the direction where the Japs were. . . . A bunch of guys . . . finally pushed the damn jeep out, and I remember bullets hit the jerry cans [of fuel and water] on the back of the jeep. . . . I figured, oy vey. They got me to a clearing company—that’s a more sophisticated unit. Lo and behold, there’s a doctor there who, I find out later, was a friend of my sister Adele in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. . . . He took care of the belly wound, which was more dangerous than the bone wound. It’s raining cats and dogs. There’s a hole in the tent. Here’s a wide-open wound. I can remember the rain coming down right into my belly. . . . He patched me up the best he could. Later on, I said: “What about that guy next to me? Didn’t he have a belly wound, too?” He said, “Yes, but I heard you saying the Sh’mah Yisrael.”

[T]hey flew me back to Fitzsimons Hospital [in Aurora, Colorado,] . . . in a plaster cast. They cut it off, and they weigh you in a hammock. . . . I weighed 86 pounds [down from 200], and two nurses started screaming. I said, “For God’s sake, what’s going on?” The doctor, Jack Blaisdell, says, “You’re a lucky sox.” I said, “What’s happening?” He says, “These girls have never seen it. . . . You’re loaded with hundreds and hundreds of maggots, and they’re jumping all over this room.” See, this was still an open wound. . . . [Blaisdell] had never seen it from the European Theater, but this was the second one he’d seen from the South Pacific. He says, “Maggots will only eat gangrene tissue, and you’re loaded with gangrene tissue. If it wasn’t for those devils . . . this leg would have to come off right up to that groin!”

BEN FITERMAN Just as we were getting ready to march further up into the Alps, along came a German jeep flying white flags down a highway towards us. The German general wanted to talk to our general, but there was none with us. So he talked to Colonel Campion, the commander of our tanks. “We have word that the war was over at 2:00 pm,” the German general said in English. It was two-thirty in the afternoon, and I was standing right there when he said the war was over! We were supposed to hold our ground until further orders. Our colonel said that was baloney. And then he went on, “You bring your troops down here, or we’re coming up to get you.” At any rate, we waited another 45 minutes to an hour. The German general returned in his jeep with white flags and said, “I can’t bring my troops back down here. I’ve called back to my offices and we’re supposed to just hold our line and further details will come later about where we’re supposed to go.

So our colonel said, “We’re going to come get you.” Then he ordered the 1st company, 1st platoon, 1st squad to “walk down the highway—six on each side.” McDaniel was taking
Ben Fiterman on furlough in Minneapolis
the six on one side and I took six on the other. There was a small crook in the road and just as we got around that, machine guns opened up!

I got shot in the arm and McDaniel got shot in the leg. The rest of the squad were all killed—ten of us. On top of that, there were more guys who came running up and three of them got killed. The colonel said, “We’ll button up on our tanks and we’ll get them.”

When, as a casualty, I got to the Repo Depot, two miles away, some of the guys said, “What are you guys doing—the war’s over!” All Campion would have had to do was call back to find out. But he didn’t.

Letter to LARRY SCHLASINGER’s father, July 29, 1944
War Department
The Adjutant General’s Office Washington, DC

In reply refer to:
Schlasinger, Larry S. 17, 084, 348 PC-N ETO 137

Dear Mr. Schlasinger:
I am sorry it was necessary to send my recent telegram, which this letter is confirming. Your son, Staff Sergeant Larry S. Schlasinger, was seriously wounded in action on 25 June 1944.

Theater Commanders are instructed to submit to the War Department periodic reports of progress and accordingly you will be kept informed of his progress promptly as these reports are received. However, as I am sure you will realize, such reports must of necessity be brief and therefore will contain information on his condition or progress, but will not include information concerning the nature of wounds in the case of wounded personnel.

I can assure you that our hospitalized soldiers serving overseas are receiving the very best medical care and attention and it is hoped that a favorable report in his case will be received in the near future.

Knowing your desire to have a letter reach him as soon as possible, you should use the following temporary address until a change of address is furnished by him or this office and so advise all interested relatives and friends who might also want to write him:

Sincerely yours,
J. A. Ulio
Major General,
The Adjutant General

Letter to Larry from his father, July 30, 1944
Hello Larry Dear,
How are you? We want the truth. And we hope that the truth is what you told us in your letters. . . . In spite of your letters the wire from the Adj. General is giving us ideas. Is it possible that you were trying to belittle the wound just to keep us contented? We hope not. There wasn’t any letter from you last week. We are anxiously waiting for one this week. God grant it will be a cheerful one again.
The radio reports from the Normandy front are most encouraging. And so are the reports from the Italian front. And the Russians are doing just one grand job. We are warned time and again not to be too optimistic, but one cannot help feeling that the odds are too hopeless for those damn Nazis and that they got to crack.

Well, that’s that. God be with you. Dad

Western Union telegram to Larry’s father, August 7, 1944
The Secretary of War asks that I assure you of his deep sympathy in the loss of your son Staff Sergeant Larry S. Schlasinger. Report received states he died eleven July in France as result of wounds received in action. Letter follows.
Ulio The Adjutant General
[Adjutant General Ulio was in error. Larry died in a hospital in England. —Eds.]

Surviving isolation and captivity

MANNY MANOS My platoon was assigned to relieve another at an Observation Post. Early on a typically hot, sunny Philippine day, we climbed aboard a six-by-six truck to be taken to our departure point. After driving for several hours, we began marching to the Observation Post.

At the OP’s approximate location, we made radio contact, but we were unable to see the post. From the top of our hill, the lieutenant radioed [that] he would release a smoke bomb so the other platoon could spot us and guide us to them. Immediately after the smoke bomb was fired, all hell broke loose. Shells started to fall on our hill, setting the chest-high kunai grass afire and sending shrapnel in all directions. Though the barrage was brief, it seemed interminable.

When the firing stopped, I rose from my prone position to evaluate the situation. Imagine my astonishment at finding myself alone on the top of a remote hill on Luzon. Absolutely alone! No food and only my carbine and a bandolier of ammunition.

To escape the flames from the burning grass and any further exploding shells, I retreated to the rear of the hill. Briefly, I pondered the unlikely turn of events and tried to figure out what to do. I had no map or compass to determine which direction would take me back to our troops. I stopped nearby to rest for the night and set out early the next morning. Walking at a brisk pace, I happened upon a river flowing swiftly over its rocky bed. With no specific plan, I followed the river hoping it might get me back to our forces, taking short breaks for long cool drinks of water dredged up in my helmet. At night I rested.

Mid-morning the second day, I saw someone inching along a ledge on the opposite riverbank. He appeared to be an American, so I hailed him, holding my rifle at the ready. It turned out to be none other than Anthony Muli, a

Manny Manos
member of my unit, wounded in the arm during the barrage. I managed to cross the river and join him. We compared notes. Apparently, we had both been deserted by the others.

For the next three days, we plodded downriver, stopping briefly to rest or fill our empty stomachs with drinks of water. At night, we stopped. Twice each day I would climb to the top of the steep riverbank, trying to see anything which might prove helpful, but the limited view provided neither directional clues, nor any signs of US troops. We forged our way as rapidly as possible, traveling another three and a half days. Finally, mid-morning of day six we sighted an American army camp. At last! We were literally out of the woods. All I could think of were food and sleep.

Later that night, I wrote to my wife, Rosella, telling her only that my birthday, the first day that I was lost, had been anything but enjoyable, an experience to be told only to my grandchildren! At the time I was unaware that the Adjutant General of the US Army had sent my wife two telegrams. The first: “We regret to inform you that your husband is missing in action.” The second: “We are pleased to inform you that your husband has rejoined his unit.”

Of course Rosella was perplexed because during the time I was missing, she had been receiving the letters I’d written before my misadventure. Also, the letter I wrote on my return reached her after telegram one and before telegram two.

MARK HERTZ On my twelfth bombing mission over Leipzig, at 31,000 feet under heavy flak, [my] plane was hit and exploded. The tail gunner died instantly, the pilot and copilot bailed out. The navigator jumped but hit the open bomb-bay door on his way down. And I jumped.

I remembered my training. I put the oxygen tube in my mouth to breathe, and I pulled the cord when I began to see the trees. . . . I landed safely and hid in the trees by day, trying to make [my] way to Liechtenstein at night. After wandering for five days, I was captured by civilian reserve troops [and transferred] to a castle on the Oder River near Frankfurt for interrogation.

The interrogators had lots of personal information on me and tried to get me to talk about the Pathfinder radar system. One day, I was taken outside by two soldiers with pistols, and we got to a forest. I believed that they had been assigned to shoot me. They were mumbling, “Judische. Judische terrorflieger.” We sat down on a rock, and one of them pulled out a gun. One of them said in English, “I could kill you.” But they didn’t shoot at me, and they took me back to the castle and back into the basement, where I lived without a cooked meal or a bed for 18 days.

Then they came and got me and took me on a train to the prisoner of war camp [for American and British air force personnel], Stalag Luft III, on the east side of the Oder River
in what is now Poland, near the town of Sagan. Conditions in the camp were poor but could have been much worse. I was terrified that I would be mistreated as a Jew—my dog tags had the letter H for Hebrew on them, signifying that I was Jewish—but the Germans didn’t harm me.

I was once told that one day some Gestapo troops came to the camp and demanded that the American Jewish prisoners be turned over to them. Apparently, the German air force commanders refused to do so and thus actually protected their Jewish prisoners.

When the Russian soldiers came toward Sagan, the entire camp was moved west. We were roused by the guards when they poked with their bayonets and yelled, “Heraus! Heraus!” At first we walked for a while, and then we took a train for three days. . . . There were 1,800 men in our compound and a total of nearly 10,000 prisoners in all who were forced to make the “long march.” It was also known as the “Shoe Leather Express.” It was a trek of some 443 miles. Some of the prisoners ran away while we were doing our walk, but I didn’t want to do that because I was Jewish. I didn’t want to get captured as a Jew, as I felt I was safer with the military and with my fellow soldiers.
So we walked from January 28 until early April 1945. . . . The 1,800 men in my group were sleeping in the snow, walking in the slush, with hardly any food given to us by the German commanders. During that time we never sat down on a chair or on the toilet. The military issued us some food, and the people we passed by gave us food—you could reach in a fence and get a sandwich or chicken leg. We weren’t walking like a military formation. I made a friend on the walk that I kept for many years, as we slept together and shared everything. The [Americans] would sometimes drop supplies out of planes while we were walking. But they couldn’t pick us up, as you can’t land a cargo plane at a farm and they didn’t have helicopters at that time. [By April] . . . we walked into Stalag VII-A, a kind of temporary camp at Moosburg, near Munich.

While I was there I noticed the familiar smell of the stockyards, and I later realized that our prisoner of war camp was near a big concentration camp. . . . The German guards told us about them and the smell was bad, but I was never taken there. . . .

In late April we heard bombs from a distance, and then we heard combat sounds for several days. The war started to end around the 20th of April. On the 28th or 29th, an American tank came up to the fence, and the American prisoners were jubilant. We went up to the fence, and an American soldier opened up the turret top of his tank as the tank went through the fence. The Germans were at the fence, but when the tank came through the Germans fled. No bullets were fired. . . . [Then the] gates opened, and an American general with a revolver drove into the yard. In fact, it was General Patton. . . . The camp went wild with enthusiasm because the Third Army had already taken some of Germany.

LIONEL GREENBERG  There I was at 22,000 feet over southern Germany. It was a new experience for me to fly with a strange crew. I’d met the other nine men . . . for the first time in the dark of early morning, 10 minutes before we started the four engines of the Consolidated Liberator B-24 for the mission [to] Munich, June 13, 1944. [Now,] the worst of the mission was over. We [had] passed the target about 13 minutes ago. The flak hadn’t been too heavy . . . our plane was undamaged. We were on our way home . . . I was looking out of the small window on the left side of the nose, trying to spot our position more accurately. I was the navigator.

Suddenly, over the inter-phone, I heard a terrifying scream followed by the sound of ripping metal. As I was thrown to the floor, I caught a glimpse of another plane directly under us. A midair collision. Another B-24 had come from the left below to ram us directly under and behind my compartment on the front of the plane. I fell partly on the bombardier and partly on the bomb sight. Things began to whirl as I pushed the bomb sight to get back to my escape hatch, the nose-wheel door. I pushed so hard on that bomb sight that I snapped the metal neck and eyepiece off. I was getting mad and swearing as I began to think of what a grease spot I’d make when I hit the ground four miles below . . . . The plane went into a spin. I was beaten to unconsciousness against the bomb sight and fuselage, probably 15 seconds after we collided.

Next I felt a rush of cool air, and I regained consciousness enough to realize I was making a freefall through space. . . . Not knowing how close I was to hitting, I wasted no time in reaching under my flak suit to pull the ripcord. I was doubtful whether my chute would open . . . from under a 30-pound flak suit. Luckily it did. The suddenness with which my descent was decreased almost knocked me unconscious again. Then I wiped the blood out of my eyes and saw that I was about 10,000 feet above the ground. I took my flak suit off and
watched it float to earth in a flat spin. In a matter of minutes I made a safe landing on German soil. I was captured by a German soldier about a minute and a half after I hit the ground, as I was guiding my chute in preparation to attempt an evasion.

There I was in Bavaria, Germany, walking on a trail, carrying my parachute and flying boots. My captor was behind me, pointing his rifle at my back. My captor, hereinafter called “Fritz,” appeared to be a member of the home guard. His uniform was old and wrinkled and his rifle about an 1898 model. He was at least six feet tall, about 180 pounds, and appeared to be about 20 years old. He had shown no signs of wanting to harm me. We were alone—no one else was in sight, yet.

Fritz stopped me and pointed off to the right. Coming across a field of underbrush was a group of 12 men. Eleven were dressed as farmers, each carrying some type of hand farm tool, such as a shovel, hoe, pitchfork, or two-handed scythe. The twelfth man was about five foot seven, very stocky, about 200 pounds, and he carried nothing. He wore a business suit and business hat.

Fritz had me wait until they reached us. Then I remembered some tales I’d heard back at the base. Don’t get captured by civilians. They’ve been known to torture airmen by pounding their fingers on a rock or railroad track, and even killing the “Luftgangsters with Big Pockets.” When they reached us, they stopped. Then the twelfth man left the group and walked up to me. He asked, “Are you Americanisher or Britisher?” I answered, “American.” He hauled off and hit me on the jaw and knocked me down.

I dropped my chute and boots, stood up and raised my fists to defend myself. Then Fritz pushed me back with his gun barrel and aimed his rifle at the twelfth man and the others with him. He told them to leave me alone, disband and go back home. They left. Later, Fritz let me know that the twelfth man had lived in Berlin with his wife and daughter. His wife and daughter were killed in an American bombing raid. I could understand his anger toward me.

[Fritz] probably saved my life. . . . He didn’t know any English. We both were pretty good at sign language. I know a little Yiddish . . . so I could understand a little German. . . . He marched me to a new shed. . . . On the left side of the path we were following was a fenced-in area, and there were two men standing there [who] furtively gave me the “V” sign. Fritz took me into the shed and locked me in. Pretty soon he knocked at the door and came in [with] three cigarettes . . . a gift to me from the two guys in the fence—Russian prisoners of war who were working on the farm. [Later,] Fritz comes in with a cup full of some liquid, and there’s foam on top. I says, “Beer?” He says, “Bier, nicht. Milch.” So I had a nice fresh cup of milk. Then he comes back and he’s got a plate of eggs and potatoes fried together. . . . [It] was good, and I could keep it down.

In the shed I lay on the bench. First I took my helmet off. My head was full of contusions, scabs all over. . . . I took off my shirt, and I was black and blue from below the teats on up. . . . I thought, “What can I do? How can I get out of here?” . . . I’d taken quite a beating, so I just gave it up. I could never overpower Fritz. I didn’t have the strength left.

The officer comes. They put me in a vehicle [with] a couple other soldiers to guard me. The first camp we get to . . . was [an accumulation point], a little tent town of prisoners. They put us on a train. . . . A week after I went down [I got to] Dulag Luft, an interrogation [and transit] center where they put you in solitary confinement. There was a window there. I couldn’t see out [because] it was frosted, shatterproof with wire embedded in the glass. A very narrow room. I could almost touch the walls stretching my arms out horizontally, maybe 12 feet long.
I got my number, 6116. I was at the end of a long hallway. When they called out that number, I knew that my door would open and someone would escort me to an interrogation.

They knew I was Jewish. I was so stubborn. I never changed my dog tags [with the] “H” for Hebrew. . . . The first interrogator I had did not speak good English, and he caught me understanding a little German and got angry at me. “If I knew you could speak German, we would be talking German!” I says, “Well, I don’t speak German. I just understand a couple words.” He did threaten [to turn] me over to the SS, Gestapo, if I [didn’t] answer his questions. . . . He wanted to know what base I came from and what position I had on the crew. Of course, I didn’t tell him. I think I had two interrogations by him, and then I waited for three days. No interrogations. That leaves you wondering. You get nervous exponentially. Then they called 6116. I get escorted to a man educated in England, and he spoke perfect English. He was a nice man, and he says, “What have you got to hide? Now, all we want to know is, were you the navigator on this crew? We’ve got the whole crew. We don’t know who the navigator was. You don’t have to say anything. If your name belongs here as the navigator, just nod your head and then you will get a shower and you can shave and we will give you a book to read and send you to a permanent camp. I nodded my head. I figured I wasn’t giving away any secrets. Of course, he threatened me with the Gestapo if I didn’t do it. “We don’t like Jews. You know that,” he said to me.
I get sent to Stalag Luft III . . . roughly 100 miles southeast of Berlin. . . . [W]e were registered by German soldiers who were probably as old as our fathers and veterans of World War I. . . . One man says, “I notice you’re Hebrew.” “Yes.” “What should I put down?” he says. I says, “Well, my dog tags say ‘Hebrew.’” He says, “But you know we don’t like Jews.” “That’s right. I know that.” He says, “You might suffer if I put down ‘Hebrew,’” . . . but I didn’t take the bait. I says, “Look, you asked me a question, I gave you an answer. What you put down is your business.” He put down, “Other.” Inside the prison camp nobody ever indicated they knew I was Jewish. . . .

We had a secret radio . . . and we knew that the Russians were getting close to camp. On January 29, 1945, the play [at our little prisoners’ theater] was You Can’t Take It with You. At eight o’clock that night [the play was stopped] when the senior American officer walked on stage. “Get ready. We are marching out of here in two hours.” . . . Now, I’m from Grafton, North Dakota. I know temperature. I know the sound of snow when you walk on it. The temperature was at least 10 below and a wind! . . . I was originally issued an American Army overcoat and some underwear, maybe a shirt. I can’t remember ever being issued a pair of pants. . . . I had Army six-inch-high boots I was wearing on the mission. . . . But I was a trader . . . and had been trading all along [, and] I could sew a little. I had a good supply of socks.

We had no idea where we were going. . . . We fall out in the snow, and then we start marching. They marched us on the Autobahn. No vehicles . . . on the Autobahn because they are clogged with snow. They didn’t have any gas anyway. We saw lots of civilians on their way away from the Russians. . . . They’re walking, too, just like we are, but they’re going in a different direction. We were heading . . . east to a railhead. . . . For me it was a three-day march . . . we ended up . . . in boxcars, 50 in a “40 and 8” [40 men and 8 horses]. . . for three days and three nights. They let us out once to take a shit. . . .

Most of us went to Moosburg [, near Munich], Stalag VII-A [, where] we were liberated on April 29, 1945.

HY SCHANFIELD (as told by his daughter, Sandy Teichner, and son, Paul Schanfield)
After six months of fighting, the Americans were surrendering [in the Philippines]. But Corregidor was heavily fortified. [Our] dad hid in a cave and then decided to swim to Corregidor. In that ocean there were sharks, so he greased himself up and swam most of the way, until he realized it was being bombed. So he had to go back and surrender. . . . He ended up with these half-starved people, marched for seven days, 100 miles without food or water from the tip of Bataan . . . 76,000 Pows—12,000 Americans and the rest Filipinos.

Even worse than the Bataan Death March were the ships that transported the prisoners to Japan to work in the lead and copper mines. Dad called them “hell ships.” Prisoners were on board 39 days with nowhere to move and little to eat.

Hy Schanfield
7. Death of the Commander-in-Chief

JERRY WEINBERG journal, Friday, [April] 13, 1945. New Guinea. President Roosevelt died. That was the saddest news we have heard since the war started. Got up this morning and heard a few fellows say they heard it on short wave, but no-one would believe it until we tuned in for ourselves. We’re really shocked and still can’t get over such a catastrophe. Commentators still on the air and we’re all ears to get the details. Never saw such a bunch of guys with long sad faces around here now.

JULES LEVIN After more than three months of combat we had become seasoned soldiers, responding with alacrity to our assigned jobs. We functioned as a well-trained team with a minimum need for words or orders. Everyone knew their job and performed it well. By April 12 everything seemed to be going our way. Our morale was high and we were in excellent spirits when we heard the following dispatch from the BBC:

Franklin D. Roosevelt died at Warm Springs, Georgia, of a cerebral hemorrhage.
Vice President Harry S. Truman was sworn in as President of the United States.

To most of us, Roosevelt was a president we felt we knew. He had just started his fourth term and had served as the Chief Executive . . . longer than any other [president,] and it would take some time for many of us to get over his passing.

DAN HEILICHER journal, Sat. April 14, 1945. Today the whole world is mourning the loss of our great president . . . . Everything in Paris is closed, from the nite clubs to the smallest bar, in his honor. . . . The world looked to Roosevelt to make this coming peace a lasting peace.
SAMUEL BRAEMAN We went up to help General [Anthony] McAuliffe in the Battle of Bastogne, then we went to Ulm. . . . These little German boys were out. . . . Hitler had [them] come out with rifles to protect their cities. Thirteen-, twelve-year-old boys to stop the Americans. Well you know these little boys couldn’t do that. We never would have fired if we’d known they were young German boys we were firing at. . . . The German Red Cross would come and take their tags, whatever they had on, and the German mothers would come out. . . . That was a sad part because out came their mothers holding their kids, grieving, holding their dead children. That was terrible. It still brings tears to my eyes.

JERRY SINYKIN It was unbelievable. . . . An armored division is an awesome thing. The Germans would stand in front of their houses, and it would take 11 hours for this division to pass. You know, tank after tank after truck after truck after truck. It’s a huge thing.

One of the things I had to do was secure billeting for the officers. . . . We would go to a German house or two and say, “We want this house for 24 hours. Our officers are going to sleep here.” I spoke broken German . . . because my father had brought a German trainer to train [our] guide dogs [before the war], and I lived with him in the summertime and had learned a smattering of German.

[I’d] go to the house, and I’d say—I had a machine gun—“We need this house. You’ve got 20 minutes. You’ve got to leave. Take whatever you want, and we’ll probably be gone in two days. . . . We won’t touch anything.”
They always gave me an argument. The first thing they’d say was, “Ich bin kein Nazi.” [I’m not a Nazi.] The second thing they’d say to this little baby-faced kid was, “Why don’t you go next door to the Schultzes? They have a nicer house.” I developed a technique. I’d come to the door, and I’d say, “Ich bin Jude.” That seemed to shorten the arguments.

**JULES LEVIN**  As we entered Cham we encountered lots of civilians enthusiastically waving white flags, so our platoon commander “drafted” one to act as a guide. This worked well until suddenly we noticed that the streets were conspicuously bare of civilians. The guide would go no further, but pointed up the avenue and said, “Deutche soldaten,” German soldiers.

The column of tanks proceeded cautiously through the narrow streets, and for several more blocks all was quiet. Suddenly, after the first two tanks passed a walled entryway that led to a large white stone house, out stepped two young, gorgeous girls. At least to us they were gorgeous, but we hadn’t even talked to a member of the opposite sex for at least three months, so our tastes were not very discriminating. But they definitely were young and from the way they were proportioned, they certainly were female. Hands on hips, they sashayed between the walls on both sides of the entrance, smiling and waving. This immediately caused a flurry of heads, including mine, to emerge from the openings in the tanks. The tankers, along with the infantrymen on the tanks’ decks, enthusiastically waved back.

As our tank, the fourth in line, drew by the entryway, the girls ran back behind the walls. Just then, an SS soldier appeared in the entryway and started lobbing “potato mashers” (German grenades) at our tank and then quickly ran back toward the house. The rubbernecks who had been stretching for a better look pulled down in record time. Without waiting for a command I swung the turret of my tank in the direction of the house and started to fire at the fleeing German. I planned to bring him down with the machine gun bullets, but in the excitement I fired a “76” from the cannon. It exploded into the house. My loader instinctively reloaded, so I again fired the high explosive. He loaded and I fired. So it went until the house was in shambles. We did suffer a couple of casualties.

**SID FELDMAN**  When we finished with Aachen, you could stand on a chair and see the whole thing. [We] completely destroyed it. . . . Then, after Aachen, we took Cologne, Germany. The only thing that wasn’t destroyed in Cologne was the Ford plant. . . . There was politics. We noticed that. They were building Ford vehicles, you know.

**REUBEN BERMAN**  letter to his son, March 10, 1945

Dear David,

Here it is the tenth of March and your birthday is just a month away. You will be eleven years old and from what I hear you’re a fine big boy for an eleven year old. Congratulations on your birthday. I think I can safely promise you that it is the last one you will spend without your poppa. We have crossed the Rhine; the Russians are over the Oder. The most formidable barriers to Germany are crossed and now the allies are in good tank country all the way. It will take us about two weeks to get sizable forces across the Rhine but after that the campaign will be a fast moving affair. The Germans were smart enough to blow every bridge but one across the Rhine from Coblenz to Cologne. That one is doing us great service now. But of course you can’t send an army across one bridge. We’ll have to build many others. But I never thought we would get across without a gigantic combined operation with paratroops and all. Incidentally, the general who was responsible for the demolition of the bridge at
Remagen, the bridge that didn’t blow up, he’s going to catch hell from the Nazis. He’ll probably be executed if he doesn’t commit suicide first. Do you remember how terribly upset we were in America when we learned in 1940 that General Corp of the 7th French Army had failed to blow up the bridge over the Meuse? We thought then that defeat or victory was a matter of a bridge being down or up. It wasn’t so then any more than the presence or absence of that one bridge on the Rhine can make any important difference to the campaign. The bridge simply means an accelerated campaign with fewer American lives lost.

Reuben Berman
Harold Arenson  This is the most interesting part of my whole Army experience. We came to the Elbe River in Germany . . . like the Mississippi here, only wider and swifter. The Germans were trapped between the Russians coming from one side and us on the other . . . . They desperately did not want to be taken prisoner by the Russians because they had committed so many atrocities [against them]. So 24 hours a day you’d hear chopping and cutting and building of rafts to surrender to the Americans . . . . We could hear them right across the river. You could even see them over there. Many of them tried to swim and drowned. Of course, the Americans were all helping them to get out of the rafts because they wanted to see if they had pistols or anything they could get. Thousands, literally thousands of prisoners [, were sent] marching . . . I don’t even know where they went.

Finally, after this went on for quite a while, word came across from the Russians that we were not to take any more prisoners. So we didn’t. We sent them back [across the Elbe].

Then a strange thing happened. Of course, we had a raft to go across the river. Our colonel was part Indian with a beautiful physique—really a dynamic-looking guy. He went across in a jeep to meet the Russians. He was there for a while, and then he comes back. He traded the jeep for a horse, a white horse! I can still see him sitting on this white horse, coming back across the river.

Harold Specktor  I went to a town called Eberbach on the Neckar River, downriver from Stuttgart. . . . We had a POW cage. We had 200 and some prisoners, 10 [American] enlisted men, and two officers. We were the administrative group . . . cause the prisoners were sent out on work details. . . . I used to play pinochle with [the prisoners]. . . . I could speak enough German so I could converse with them. . . . I didn’t tell them [I was a Jew]. I figured, better off not said. There [were] enough problems as it was with 200 of them.

Jules Levin  The Germans approaching us were being led by one of our tanks, which was being driven very slowly. The turret of the tank was turned 180 degrees so that the guns were facing to the rear directly at the POWs who were following it. The line of fresh prisoners extended back beyond what the eye could see. Patrick and I started to walk in the direction of the approaching Germans and began to relieve them of desirable items such as watches and binoculars, and even a couple of pistols. I reveled in my opportunity to taunt some of them, especially officers. I would tap my chest with my index finger and boast, “Ich bin ein Juden.” (I’m a Jew.) Most willingly gave us whatever we asked for, but there was one particularly obdurate soldier who refused to surrender his watch. How dare he! He was completely at our mercy and we could have done anything to him with impunity, but I didn’t have the heart to do anything and just kept walking closer to the end of the line. At first I admired the man for his courage,
but as an after-thought I realized how incredibly stupid his actions were. His bravado could easily have cost him his life.

LEONARD PARKER There was a Rhine crossing. We lost a lot of people there. . . . The Siegfried Line was [also] terrible. . . . By the time we hit Nuremberg, the German army was really giving up. . . . [So] we knew when we were hitting an SS group because they fought. . . . There was a colonel, an SS officer, actually shooting his own people who refused to resist!

U.S. Army bridge-building on the Rhine River, 1945
9. Witnessing the Unimaginable: Liberating the Death Camps

NEWTON WOLPERT letter to Irv Harris, May 11, 1945

Dear Irv,

I don’t know how to start this letter but I had the most horrible experience about fifteen minutes ago. We have been waiting for the engineers to complete a bridge across the river so I took off in a jeep with a couple other officers. We went to a concentration camp about a mile from here that was freed by us yesterday.

The first thing I saw was a pile of about 47 bodies all piled up, and half buried continuing down the main lane in the camp, strung out in a line, were at least two hundred others, all stripped of clothes and each one almost a skeleton. The bodies were not decomposed at all so couldn’t have been laying there too long. You could see backbones where you should have seen stomachs. Their arms and legs were the size of children’s. It looked like they had been starved to death and then shot.

The “living” quarters consisted of a large dugout with a roof. No sanitation. Every German farm I have seen has better quarters for its pigs than these were.

To top it off, not 600 yds. from the camp was a beautiful farm house which we didn’t fire at because it had a large white flag flying when we approached. Of course, the people claimed they were unaware of what went on. Also, I have yet to meet my first Nazi and I have really been through Germany.

You may have read about our division crossing the Danube. My company and an infantry company reached the river first. [The Germans] blew our bridge when I was about 200 yds. from it. The task force on our left got to the river an hour later and were lucky and captured a bridge. . . . We are some distance from there now and can even see the Alps in the distance.

I don’t seem to be able to write much more at the moment for what I have just seen. Pass this letter around to the family. I can’t write about it anymore.

Please write soon and give my best to everyone,

Newt

Elmo (Garnet), Charlie and I rode down to Dachau, about 15 miles north of Munich. We had been hearing on our radios horror stories of the Nazi death camps. When we parked our vehicle about 200 feet from the entrance, all appeared peaceful.

The fences were high and topped by barbed wire. There were masses of people milling about inside the fence, but still there was an air of quiet. The grounds were neat outside the fence and the sky was a beautiful blue with just a few clouds. As we walked closer, the pastoral beauty was marred by two jarring sights.

Before us lying in the ditch was the battered body of a Nazi SS Trooper. He had been snatched away from the US troops who were protecting him from the prisoners and was beaten to death with clubs, rocks, fists. Even if he were lying there nude, one could tell he was not a prisoner, since he was the only one around who had any fat on his body.

On our left was a railroad siding with a boxcar, providing a most gruesome sight. The door was open and countless nude bodies could be seen, some hanging half out of the door, while numerous others were lying on the ground. There were many little children also. They, as well as the adults, had all the earmarks of long standing malnutrition. The expression “skin and bones” applied perfectly.

Entering the camp we saw thousands of persons, nearly all male, mostly dressed in prison garb with black and white vertical stripes. Most of them appeared to be anemic, showing the profound weight loss associated with starvation. Within moments of entering the gates the crowd of prisoners surrounded us. They caressed our woolen short coats as though to garner some strength or sustenance from the contact.

As we attempted to move along, one bedraggled fellow looked at me questioningly and asked, “Bist der un yid?” (Are you a Jew?) When I nodded yes, he was so overjoyed it was impossible to describe. It was as though a spark had ignited a flash fire. In moments I was surrounded by 50 Jews—all talking at once and shushing each other. They stated that there were 2,000 Jews in the camp and expressed fears they would not be treated equally. I tried my best to reassure them that everyone would be treated well and equally by the American troops.

The subservient attitude, the deference shown us was both pathetic and embarrassing. As we walked by men doffed their hats, bowed or saluted. Others shouted, “Mach Platz!” (Make way!) as we walked along. A Polish priest born in Connecticut acted as our guide. He had left for Poland in 1932, then in 1942 he became a prisoner in this camp. Can I ever forget his exuberant, “My Gosh, we were happy when the Americans came on Sunday.” To hear that Americanism contrasted with his broken English was heartwarming. He went on to inform us that the census was 32,000, mostly political prisoners. There were also some soldiers. Included were Poles, Dutch, Russians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, French and Jews. . . . Of 2,200
priests of all nationalities, few are alive. All priests but Poles are permitted to use the chapel at Dachau. If a man is found with a rosary, he is forced to kneel in the street and others must spit on him as they pass by.

In Block 24 we saw fresh inmates from Buchenwald who differed from the corpses only in the fact that they still moved, groaned and breathed a little. One lay on the floor in a narrow passageway, recently expired. Eight men sleep in a space designed for three. The space from the bottom of a bunk to the top still reminds me of a bakery with barely enough space for each loaf.

Gangrenous hands and feet, bedsores and wounds all untreated. A horrible sight never to be forgotten! They were used as human guinea pigs. They were inoculated with various diseases and experimental drugs were used. There was a separate compound with 300 Jewesses. There were eleven whores living with the men. The SS officers took pleasure in watching them cohabit. The whores were promised freedom but were shot before the SS fled.

On our left as we entered, there was a one story brick building. As we faced it, there were two tall chimneys with dark grey smoke drifting upward. In front of this building was a pit about 25 feet square, 15 feet deep and surrounded by a strong wire fence about 10 feet high. On the wall of the pit, adjacent to the brick building, were several small doors. . . . [W]e walked around the pit . . . and entered the “shower” room. It appeared to measure about 30 feet square. It was neatly tiled and the ceiling was low with about 10 or 20 “shower” heads. The floor had a number of drains scattered about. . . . An observation window allowed the Nazis to watch the death struggles, in the interest of science perhaps. . . .

The priest quoted a recent message from Himmler ordering evacuation of the camp on Monday, April 30, 1945, with instructions to murder all the prisoners before leaving. The SS were busily engaged in following orders by machine-gunning the prisoners when the Americans arrived. They showed me the penciled memo purportedly from Himmler that confirmed the priest’s statement.

MERTON SINGER letter to his nephew Steven Press, November 10, 1997

Dear Steve,

Thanks for your holiday greeting and note inquiring where I was when some of the Nazi concentration camps were liberated. The answer, I was at 2 of them. The first was Ohrdruf, which was a branch of Buchenwald, and the 2nd was Buchenwald.

I was at Ohrdruf the 1st day the camp was liberated by our infantry. When I arrived a dead Nazi guard was lying in front of the main gate. When our infantry arrived, they captured and disarmed all the guards. Some of the inmates gathered up 26 of the guards and told the GIs that these 26 were the most inhumane of all and that the GIs should shoot them. The GIs said “Sorry! However, if you want to kill them here’s our guns.” The Jewish inmates promptly did the job. When I arrived the dead guards were still bleeding.

Buchenwald was a camp near the city of Weimar. I saw it at its worst on the 2nd day after liberation. Mass graves 10–12 feet deep, 3–400 yards long and about 12 feet wide. I saw the gas chambers which had been used the day before, the ovens, the electrified fence with the body still electrified to the fence. . . . Hundreds of naked bodies were piled like cord wood, all emaciated and many with a bullet in the back, the skull. We took care of the kids by putting them into the Nazi Barracks, where the Nazis lived in style, and we began feeding them. We [manned] an Army Evacuation Hospital with about 100 doctors and 60 [registered nurses] with equipment to save those lives that were savable. I could tell you personal stories about
Buchenwald, but it would take time. Needless to say, I visited the camps in April '45. I can see and relate everything like it was yesterday. The bestiality is indescribable. You wouldn’t believe it unless you saw it yourself.

I felt blessed to be fighting the Nazis. 1st I was fighting for my family and myself as US citizens. 2nd I was fighting for the survival of all Jews, including most especially US Jews. Had Hitler won the war in Europe, then England would have been next, then the US. I would not be here to write a letter and you would not be there to receive it.

I was in Patton’s army during the liberation of all of Germany. He and Eisenhower and Bradley visited Buchenwald on one of the days I was bringing food to be eaten by the children. All three surrounded by crowds of military personnel and the media. It was a sterling sight.

I feel fortunate to have been a professional soldier engaged in a struggle for [the] survival of my country. A rare opportunity. I was 30 and 31 years old and loaded with responsibility. The people who fought alongside me were 100% dedicated. We had one helluva unbeatable army.

I hope what I have written is what you expected to hear. . . .

Love to all,
Mert

JERRY SINYKIN  In Austria, the biggest town we were close to was Linz. . . . It was at that time we liberated the concentration camp [at] Mauthausen. . . . You can’t comprehend it as a young man. You just can’t . . . here are bodies, human bodies. . . .

By the time [I get] there, there’s no more combat going on. . . . As you approached it, you see pens filled up with German soldiers [and] prisoners. You see thousands of prisoners, ranging from people that can barely walk, you know, and bodies, piled-up bodies. . . . They had earth-moving vehicles that were pushing dead bodies into open pits. But the most frightening thing was the living . . . they were hungry, and we were trying to feed them. We had soup kitchens . . . but you had to be careful: they couldn’t tolerate a lot of food. I talked to a guy who could speak a little English . . . for about two, three minutes—this was a prisoner—till I finally figured out it wasn’t a guy. It was a Jewish girl. I presume she was a young woman, maybe very late teens, early twenties, but you could not tell her sex ’cause she was a walking skeleton. . . . She was, I think, French. . . . Nobody could believe it. The men were very mad. We did some terrible things.

I’ll tell you one story: I was driving a jeep, and I came to a crowd. I saw a man tied to a fence post with a stake, a forked stake, stuck in his belt and the point . . . [up under his chin. He had] a sign hung around him that said, “I killed for cigarettes. Throw your butts here.” He was a guard, a German guard, and he’d been identified as one of the guards who had apparently killed prisoners to get their cigarette rations. . . . The Americans were so angry [at this German guard that] they had done this.

When I came, I had officers with me and they stopped, [not] because they felt we were hurting the guy. They stopped because you’ve got thousands of Germans. You can’t stand around, even though [now the Germans are the] prisoners . . . [and see them] tortured to death. Like so many things, there’s an unfairness about the war. The people who are left there are the lowest-rank people. . . . But they’re the ones, of course, that bore the brunt of our anger and our hostility.

Now, I knew. It was then, suddenly—you know, being a Jew has always been a little bit strange in a gentile society—[but now] this became huge.
May 1st, 1945

Dearest Mom, dad and Jackie,

There is so much I must write to you about. I know you have been worried about me but the very fact that you have this letter should assure you that I am still well and trusting in God. A little tired and worn out perhaps, and maybe a little older now, than my 22 years — but well, never the less.

Since the last letter which I wrote to you from Nuremberg we have come a long way in just a short while. Many times since I have come overseas, while miserable in a wet foxhole, or sweating out a Jerry Artillery barrage, or lying out in the rain pinned down by enemy small arms fire, I have asked myself what is it all about. Why am I there — why? why? why? why? After what I saw the past few days it seems easy to
answers those questions which up to now seemed unanswerable. You see 3 days ago we freed a German concentration camp, the second largest in all of rotten Germany, at Dachau just outside of Munich. At one time there were 150,000 prisoners there. Jews, Poles, Russians, Czechs, and German political prisoners. Now there are barely 13,000 left. When our company first approached the camp we came upon a railroad on which there were many boxcars—all of them filled with dead bodies—the stink was terrific. There were young children and women and men who had been lined up and machine gunned to death by the SS just a few days previously. Why? Because they couldn’t be taken along by the retreating Nazis. We took no German prisoners that day. All that we captured, and there were 350 SS, we killed. They are no better than swine and we
treated them as such. We saw and smelled the crematorium where they cremated the dead bodies after removing the shoes and any other valuables the people might possess. We saw the quarters where these people stayed, some had been there as long as twelve years. We heard from the lips of the prisoners themselves as to how they were beaten and starved and made to work anywhere from 12 to 18 hours in one day. We listened to countless stories of cruelty and the inhumanity of the Nazis and it made one want to tear the eyes out of the next German soldier you saw.

When we liberated the prisoners ——
maybe I'd better go into more detail. You see, that day our company was spearheading and my squad was scouting up ahead of the column. We came upon the camp enclosure and out of the gate came three prisoners dressed
In the blue and white striped suit
that they all wore. The first one
yelled at me "Boy are we glad to
see you" and you could have knocked
me over with a feather because I
hadn't expected anyone to yell at me
in English. He was a U.S. Army
captain who had been parachuted in
France 3 months before D-Day and
on a secret mission and had been
subsequently captured by the Gestapo
and sent to Dachau. I guess the
rest of the prisoners had been waiting
to see if we were all right because
there then came a flood of human
skeletons out of the gates. Mostly Jews
some Poles and others mixed in. The
captain was the only American in the
bunch. Mom, these people fell on our
necks and kissed us, crying for joy.
They fell on the ground at our feet and kissed our boots and grabbed for our hands and kissed them and these suffering, crying Jewish people yelled "Dank Gott was ge-
thaken gekomen — jetzt genen mir frie!" There were women, children and men alike — those that were able to walk — all crying, half mad with happiness, the last of 4,000,000 Jewish people in Germany. By that time the rest of the company had caught up and we gave them our cigarettes which they grabbed up like a drowning man would grab at the air. They fought like mad dogs amongst themselves over the rations that we passed out. You see they had been on a diet of 10 grams dark bread, what they called water soup, and one potato, each day. It tore our hearts out to see people who had
suffered so much and many of us had eyes overflowed with tears. A Jewish man came up to me and asked me if it were true that there were Jewish soldiers in the American army. When I told him that I was a Jewish "unteroffizier" he nearly went mad. Soon I had about 50 Jewish men and women around me hugging and kissing me. They were starved also for "das jüdische geist" and I wanted so much to make them happy. I sang some "chazonish shtiekelach" for them and also "A jüdishe Namee." One asked me if I wouldn't write my Jewish name for him on a piece of paper. Soon I was scribbling {2127 N. 16th Street Milwaukee, Wise} for them all, on dirty scraps of paper that appeared in their hands like magic. They all wanted it as a souvenir from
the first American Jewish soldier they had ever seen. I saw first hand the things that I have read about and which I had never quite believed. Now, I know what this war is all about. Now I know why we are fighting. To me, all the suffering and misery I've had to put up with these past 8 months has been well worth while just to see the joy on the faces of these tortured, suffering people repaid all of us thousand fold. Maybe all this doesn't sound like me, but, dear mama, you would have to see for yourself to understand what it is. I'm proud to be one of the many who finally helped free those poor souls who have been through a hell that the decent mind cannot imagine possible here on
Gods own earth.

We guarded the camp for three hours until the American Military government moved in to take over and then we moved onward to Munich. You probably know by now that Munich is now in American hands. We all believe that the war can't last much longer. The more optimistic say a week. I'll give it another month. Like the other large German cities we have taken, Munich is in bubbles, just the outskirts maintain there former beauty.

This letter has been a long one, but I wanted to let you know of how our people have suffered and that we're (I mean the Americans) are bringing light in their hearts and maybe in the homes they may have again some day. I have hopes that you'll feel as I feel.
that the anxiety and worry and heart suffering you are going thru is for something. To stamp out the poison Hitler and his kind have spread over the world.

I will write again when I can.

I love you all and miss you very much. Regards to all of our friends.

Still your same devoted

Sammy
10. War’s End

Celebrating V-E Day

DAN HEILICHER  journal, Monday, May 10, 1945. Paris. The merry making of VE Day is just about over & I will say again that VE night along the Champs Elysees is something I will never forget. . . . On the 8th of May at 3 o’clock our commanding officer assembled most of the base personnel in a big area & there thru a loud speaker we heard Churchill’s speech. After that our CO gave a short speech & also a prayer by the chaplain.

It was a beautiful nite for a victory celebration & the French gave it all they had. Even last nite they celebrated. At about 10 o’clock last nite I flew over Paris on a flight to London & the illuminated monuments of Paris shone brightly. The Arc de Triumph [sic] was lit like a ball of fire.

WALTER SCHWARZ  The whole ipw [Interrogator of Prisoners of War] team was sent to Plzén, Czechoslovakia. . . . That’s where we celebrated V-E Day. Now I celebrated a little more than the others did because, six years before, I was chased out of that country, you know, and now I’m here with a victory!

JERRY SINYKIN  The troops are very anxious to go home. The war is over [in Europe.] We’ve still got war in Japan. . . . I stayed in the Army of Occupation in a place [near Munich] called Feld München for about 10 or 11 months.

Young soldiers have just two things in mind now—they want to go home [and they’re] always interested in sex. . . . [A]ll during the Occupation, there was this non-fraternization rule, which was just ignored most of the time. You’d see these strange things . . . in these little towns [such as] a girl by herself with a blanket under her arm walking out of town on this country road, and 30 feet behind would be a soldier walking by himself out of town. Now, you had to have a lot of imagination [to think they] were nature lovers [out] for a stroll in the country. . . .

On the outskirts of Munich [I met a German girl]. She was quite young, and I was pretty nice. I used to supply
her mother with coffee. They had a little apartment, and it was on top of the beer hall. I kind of got some insight as to the average German people. It was pretty tough for them, the last three years of the war. They didn’t have anything. They weren’t political. They weren’t upper class. They didn’t have any money, any shoes. [Her mother was] obviously a widow and so forth. Anyhow, I’d been up having coffee and I’d brought her some sugar, and I went home to the camp. . . .

The Germans had a pretty high color line before the war. The only blacks [they] ever saw were the ones in their colonies in Africa. . . . [The] occupation troops were heavily black because of the quartermasters and the trucking groups and so forth. . . . I don’t know what the percentage was, but I would suspect that the white/black ratio changed. . . . [S]omebody should do a sociological study and find out what happened to that generation of children born from black soldiers and German girls, ’cause there were a lot of them.

[In] Feld München I went to the Red Cross [recreation center] and was playing ping-pong with a black soldier when another black soldier, a great big black soldier, came over and said, “Put yo paddle down, boy.” Well, it turned out that what had happened is that a bunch of soldiers had come to this hall—black soldiers. They’d been turned away under the false pretense that this was the 378th Artillery and you couldn’t come in there unless you were a member of the 378th, which wasn’t true. They’d come back with a bunch of guys and created a fight. This led to the fact that some totally unrelated black soldiers got off a bus at Feld München, got in a fight, and were killed [by] American soldiers. The word came back to the camp that
there’s a race riot, so the black soldiers came in, and that’s why they were throwing me out, ‘cause I was playing ping-pong.

So, suddenly, we were in the unusual position that we were uncomfortable about the black soldiers’ and the white soldiers’ relationship. And if you went downtown in Munich by yourself, which you had to be pretty dumb to do, the returning German soldiers, now in civilian uniforms but free, if they could, would do you in. You had to be very careful.

Another thing that happened after the war is we . . . had [with us] a DP [Displaced Person] who was Polish, and he was a barber. That was wonderful ’cause now we had a guy who knew how to cut hair. He was a small, little Jewish barber, kind of roly-poly. He . . . was very nice. We got to be pretty good friends. Then I found out that on the nights he didn’t work, he rode the then-reestablished streetcars into Munich, looking to see if he could recognize [any guards] from the camp. . . . He would follow them home and then would come back with his friends and try to do [them] in. Somehow when you know the guy that’s cutting your hair has been cutting throats the night before, it makes your hair stand up!

HAROLD ARENSON I was waiting for my number to come up so I could go home. I was assigned to what they call a claims team. . . . You know, bighearted Americans—we were going to pay for every bit of furniture we destroyed, every fence we knocked down. Anything that we did, they could put in a claim for. We had a lawyer and a driver, which was me, and an interpreter. We’d go out and take depositions from people. . . . It was in Neufchâteau, Belgium. That’s when we had a strange [claim]. One woman claimed she was raped, but she didn’t put in for the rape. She put in for a torn dress.

NEWTON WOLPERT letter to the Harris family, May 11, 1945
Dear People,
Just a note to let you know that all is well with yours truly now that the shooting’s stopped. My main difficulty seems to be in sitting still.

I’ve got the company off in a small town. We fixed up a baseball diamond, swimming hole and recreation room. Trying to keep the men busy and rather than give them lectures—thought they would derive more benefit and enjoyment from a full recreational program.

Last night had a VE party for the men. Have been carrying a truckload of champagne we took away from the Jerries that they took from the French. We had saved it for the occasion and really did ourselves up proud. Had about twenty liberated Russians and Poles to the party. Probably won’t be able to lower myself to Scotch when I return.

Was told I was put in for a cluster to my bronze star, but am still waiting to see it.

Newt

JULES LEVIN The division was moved to a town called Kremsmunster . . . on the south side of the Danube. . . . approximately 100 miles west of . . . Vienna. We took up quarters in an immense castle-like structure. We had wonderful weather during the three summer months I spent there. It had been a monastery . . . a beautiful building and we had nice quarters (by army standards). It was almost like being on a vacation. There was a swimming pool available, horses to ride and frauleins nearby. The army’s policy on fraternizing with the “natives” was, in a word, NO! However, now that the war was over, enforcement of the policy became lax and was soon abandoned. We had plenty of free time so one could engage in the pursuit of feminine companionship without fear of retribution. I didn’t have access to a car, but I
did have access to a horse. One day I rode my horse to a nearby beach, where I met a friendly young lady with whom I attempted conversation. My German, spoken with a Yiddish accent, was basically broken Yiddish with a sampling of German words that I had learned to supplant [with] those that I knew were different from Yiddish. Our talk was slow going (my Yiddish isn’t that great either), but we were beginning to understand each other. She suggested that we go spaztergang (take a walk). Problem: What do I do with the horse? I didn’t dare tie him up and leave—someone might steal him. So I tried to make a date for that evening. She readily gave me her address, something on halbstrasse (literally, “half street”). I never found it.

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HAROLD ZATS The war [in Europe] ended on May 7. We were in Bologna, moving from our Grosseto airbase to an airbase in northern Italy in the Lake District. . . . We were in the mud and rain, going north. The German trucks were coming south [to] surrender. . . . We stayed there for a month [and then] were issued a weapons carrier, which is sort of like a Hummer. They divided all these carriers among the men and told us a certain date to be in Naples to ship out, but it was not to the U.S. It was scheduled to ship us to the China-Burma-India Theater of war. So we were on our way to China just before the atom bomb was dropped. . . . Outside of the Panama Canal . . . they turned our ship around [, and we sailed] to Boston.

ARNOLD FRISHBERG They dropped the bomb, and we got to Shanghai. . . . We were at anchor, and every morning I would look out the porthole and I would see six to eight kids, teenagers with shorts on, sleeveless shirts. Every day they would be out there staring at us.
Finally, I went on the deck and called to them. They said, “We would like to come out to the ship and take a tour. We’re curious and so glad you are here and liberated us.”

What happened was that here was a group that had become refugees. They escaped from Germany and came all the way across Europe and started a community in Shanghai—Jewish people, all Jewish Germans—youngsters, teenagers, old people. So I went to the captain . . . and he said, “Be very careful.” So they came on, and I took them through the ship . . . . One kid was called Peter Wollstein, and we got to be very friendly. I said, “One of these days we’re going to leave, and you’re going to leave. . . . [But] keep in touch.”

BEN FITERMAN  On August 13, 1945, our company was transferred to Naples, and we prepared to leave for Japan, where the war was still raging. . . At the break of day on August 14 . . . my company all lined up [on the dock] to go to Japan. . . . We boarded a personnel carrier with 10,000 men aboard where the following day it was announced that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Japan. President Truman saved my life. The ship turned about and headed for the US and ten days later, when we finally landed in Virginia, I stood in line for hours to use a coin-operated public telephone to call [my wife,] Bernice.

BOB HARRIS letters to his family, August 9, 1945. I’ve been busy as a bee ever since we left xxxx [name censored], our last port. I have had to do an extra amount on the forms for the aliens and returning American citizens whom we have aboard. Today I had to interview about 35 more of them and among them was one Chinaman who was born in New York but has been overseas a long time—delayed in returning to the States by the war. He was an interesting person and owns a large Chop Suey joint in New York. He wound up the interview by inviting Comdr. Gatch and myself up to his place for chow mein whenever we get
there. We have all sorts of repatriates aboard—French, Egyptian, Russian, Jewish, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, American, Swiss, German, Dutch, Dane, Italian, Rhodesian, English and South American. Boy what a sweet time I’ll have with them and the FBI, immigration officials and customs authorities. . . . [T]hese people have the authority of the [U.S.] Government to travel on our ship but most of them are [not] carrying any papers. It will be a mess to try and straighten out. But on the whole, this phase of my work is interesting and I enjoy it immensely. . . .

It doesn’t look like this war is going to last much longer. I wouldn’t be a bit surprised to see it end now before Christmas time. Of course, we in the Navy will be held in for some time getting these men back to the States and bringing in fresh troops to help occupy Japan and the other islands. But it looks excellent. I can’t see where I will be in the service any more than one more year at the utmost. I have been in three years now and although I’ve had it comparatively soft, it still is no life and I’d like to spend my time a little more on good old mother earth. I’ve seen enough water . . . for a long, long time. **August 15, 1945.** I was sitting in the office doing some work when one of the radio men from the emergency radio shack came running in to tell me the Japs had agreed to surrender unconditionally and that Truman had finally announced it to all hands. It didn’t take five minutes and it was all over the ship. They broadcast it over the public address system and the band broke out all over the ship playing and singing. It was wonderful. The repatriated civilians who had been prisoners-of-war of the Japs just stood there and smiled—some cried a little—and most of the people were stunned after hearing so many false reports they could hardly believe it was really true. We all would have liked to have been back in the States for the celebration, but possibly they will hold VJ day celebrations this weekend when we will be in port. . . . Yes, we expect to arrive in Seattle Friday morning. I can say what I damned please now as all censorship rules have been relaxed. . . . I want to get off the ship now more than ever. They can keep their commissions and benefits. All I want is out.
August 14, 1945 - The night before last the word came through about Nagasaki wanting to surrender. Crew was waiting for official word to go to sea to see what we accept or not. The crew really went crazy when the word came through. The doctor passed drinks out for all to mingle and then they broke the lock off the brig and strolled the deck from there. We had something like three hundred cases of wine in sight when the word came, many hoping for drinks. We should be there this morning.

August 15, 1945

The War Is Over
LEON FRANKEL  In July of 1945 my next assignment was to be a group leader. I was going to pick up graduating ensigns from Pensacola, train with them, and take them out to the fleet for the invasion of Japan—Operation Olympic. . . . On V-J Day I was actually home in St. Paul. It was my first leave from active duty.

MERLE HILLIARD  In August '45 while en route to New Zealand I received the great news that the Pacific War had ended. It was a happy occasion and the synagogue in Wellington on Rosh Hashanah was filled with wives, children, and the older members of the community. They were all awaiting the return of their New Zealand military forces. The rabbi, who was called “Reverend,” led a lovely service and one of the Jewish families invited me to dinner. A great memory.

TED PAPERMASTER  It was early August 1945 and Germany had surrendered and our group was scheduled to be transferred to Karachi, India, on the way to help finish off Japan. I applied for leave to visit the Holy Land and I managed to hitch a ride on a South African plane similar to our own four-engine passenger planes. It was filled with British and colonial military personnel, except for the guy sitting next to me, who turned out to be a courier for the US State Department. Guess what? We both came from Minnesota and his father was a professor of Botany at the University. . . .

After a few days in Cairo, I moved on to Lydda, near Tel Aviv. . . . I had three great days in Israel, teaming up with another Jewish army officer for guided tours with a Christian Arab who had a Jewish wife! On August 6 I boarded a plane bound for Foggia, Italy [, to rejoin my air group.]. . . . I was sitting next to the radio operator. After about an hour’s flight, he suddenly jumped up and excitedly announced we had just dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. Now we all knew that the war was over.

JOE GARELICK  I got out [of the service] pretty fast. As a matter of fact, the war in Europe ended when we were on the way to get our ship. We came back on the Ille de France, which was the third-largest boat in the world at the time. It was taken over by the British, so we were in Chorley, England, [near Manchester] when the war ended, and what went on there, you wouldn’t believe. Oh, my God! They went crazy.

Anyway, I get back to New York, and in the harbor coming in, it was the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary—so all three big ships were there. That was the second time I saw the Statue of Liberty. When you see that from a ship, it’s quite exciting. We got off the ship [, and] the Red Cross was there passing out milk! In England we couldn’t drink milk because the kids didn’t have enough.

[Finally, we land our airplane in St. Paul. . . . American Hoist and Derrick is blowing their whistles like crazy . . . and I ask [the boy who’s putting the blocks on the wheels], “What’s going on?” He said, “The war in Japan just ended.” I said to the two officers, “I’ll see you Monday . . . took my B-4 bag, ran across the State Street dump, over the State Street Bridge, and home.

When I got there, nobody was home, so I broke in a basement window and crawled in. I leave my stuff there, open the doors, look up to the corner [and spot] Laibl Spector, home on leave. . . . [W]e try to go downtown. You couldn’t drive on Robert Street, and you couldn’t drive on Wabasha. We had the time of our lives there!
Epilogue
Lessons and Liabilities

TED PAPERMASTER  In spite of the ineptitude and stupidities of Allied leadership, we did win the war. I returned to Minneapolis on November 1, 1945. I recall that when I came out of the train depot that evening and looked down Hennepin Avenue with all the lights, I broke into tears.

ELLIOTT KARASOV  I came home a tech sergeant and a changed man. It helped me. I realized that the world is not full of geniuses, and I’m not so bad after all. I came back a different person, happy to be out of the Army but a little guilty about not being in combat or having a chance to kill a few Nazis. I was also surprised to hear that the FBI had been around while I was gone, checking up on me, probably to clear me for intelligence work.

HOWARD GELB  I came back resplendent in my captain’s uniform, all shiny and sparkling. I’d [read] in the Stars and Stripes and different literature that they are doing everything they can for the returning veteran . . . there was a man from the Bar Association, an attorney in Minneapolis. I came in there and introduced myself and said, “I know you’ve been working to try to place the returning veteran. . . . He said, “Let me take a look. Yes, I guess you’re right. I am in charge of that committee.” That tells you how much I got there.

Then what was even worse. . . . I came to the law school, and I thought I would talk to Dean Everett Fraser. He was a good teacher but a rather pompous, old-style type of person, less than sympathetic. I walked in and waited while he was on the telephone, and I hear him say, “Oh yes, you know, they’re older, but I don’t know that they really know much more after their experience.” [When I told] him I was looking for a job, he said, stroking his nonexistent beard, “Well, I don’t really know that there’s anything that I can do.” This is the reception that I got, figuring they’d all be working for me. I got zero.

[Although Howard Gelb saw no combat, his duties as an adjutant included debriefing crews after bombing missions. He recalled how upsetting it was to debrief frantically guilty crews who had been involved in “friendly fire” incidents, and his wife noted that he continued having nightmares about stories he had heard after they were married. —Eds.]

KENNETH BENDER  When the enemy surrendered it was very difficult to believe that the war had finally come to an end. After 5 years in the service, many of us believed that it would go on and on. I kept thinking of all the casualties we had in B Company. . . . [A] Rifle Company Commander was considered to be one of the most dangerous positions by the generals. . . .
[Of] the 27 Rifle Company Commanders, I was very fortunate in that I was wounded and evacuated . . . after 68 straight days of combat and many close calls. At that time . . . I was the 26th of the original . . . Commanders to be put out of action. Every other member of Company B was killed, captured or wounded by the war’s end.

I will never forget the men of Company B. It was the most honorable service and greatest responsibility that I have assumed in my lifetime. Nothing could compare with it.

HAROLD ARENSON  This was an unusual war. . . . I mean, people didn’t wait to be drafted. They were running to be drafted. This was a war that we fought because we had to and we wanted to. . . . As an American you’re used to so much of everything. . . . You feel lucky, I guess is the word.

ARNOLD FRISHBERG  When the war was over I was in my house on Hillcrest Avenue in St. Paul, and I got a call from San Francisco. . . . Well [Peter Wollstein, the teenager I had met in Shanghai at the war’s end] was being relocated. One of the choices was Duluth, Minnesota. I said, “Tell Peter I live near Duluth, and I think that would be a good spot for him.”

He and his father, uncle, and grandfather came. His mother and sister elected to go back to Germany. The Jewish community of Duluth welcomed them. I got reacquainted with Peter. It was very emotional.

WALTER SCHWARZ  I was born in Romania, but after the war I felt pretty much American. . . . The Army did that to me, you know.

JOE BROCHIN  Some of the things I encountered afterward. . . . OK, I lost four inches of this . . . leg. I didn’t work for about two years. I had a lot of pain. . . . Anyhow, when I felt able enough to work, I went to . . . one of the [drugstore] chains in town [and was interviewed]. . . . I get up to leave. He says, “What’s the matter with your leg?” I says, “Oh, it got banged up during the war.” What does he say to me? “Gee, I’m sorry. We don’t hire cripples.” I wanted to punch him in the nose. I just left. . . .

War is hell. I may be laughing. But believe me, I so sympathize with these kids in Iraq.

HAROLD SPECKTOR  I didn’t talk too much about it. It upset my mother. She didn’t want to know. If people would ask me, I would tell them. But you just didn’t want to talk about some
of that stuff. Our company had eight casualties—two killed and six wounded. It was all [from] our platoon.

I have eight grandchildren. They never [ask. C]ertain ones I’ll tell, but they’re not that interested. The first Yiddish word I taught my oldest grandson [was] *beschert*—meant to happen. . . . I was thinking of where I luckily escaped being injured within feet of people that were hit. Or someone took over a detail that I should have been on.

**SID RUDERMAN** During the war I was given a duty that to this day haunts me.

Outside Naples, Italy, the Fifth Army was engaged in an attempt to divert the German army from the Western front. This ill-fated maneuver was conceived by Winston Churchill and the Allies to engage the Germans in battle in Italy. This whole endeavor turned out to be a huge, costly mistake because the German forces, though only a few battalions, were ensconced in the mountainous terrain and inflicted severe casualties on the Allies.

Then came the crushing news from army headquarters that those of us fighting in Italy would not receive any replacements. All resources were to be concentrated on the invasion of Normandy. Our Fifth Army had no choice but to continue to fight, and our rear units of support staff were asked to send men up to the front lines, where progress was slow and casualties high. I was asked to help the committee select the men who would be sent up to the front lines, which meant almost certain death. It was a horrendous task. We were told to pick those soldiers labeled as "screw-ups." But who had the right to determine another man’s fate?

I have wrestled with this problem the rest of my life. Should I have volunteered to go? I don’t know. The instinct to avoid danger was overwhelming. I only hope that future generations never have to confront this dilemma.

**SID FELDMAN** I came back to St. Paul. . . . I was glad to be here. Then I bought the Day-Old Bakery on Wabasha Street. . . . I remember being in the [bakery when] a jet plane flew over, and I ducked underneath the table. . . . You bring back something when you’ve been overseas.

**LEONARD PARKER** John Larson [and I had promised] that if something happened to him, I would visit his family in North Branch, and if something happened to me, he would visit my family. Well, after the war ended, I felt I needed to keep that promise.

After I enrolled at the college of architecture at the University of Illinois, I came back to Milwaukee. This was in late October. Early in November, I decided it was time for me to go visit his family. I called Jenny, his mother, and said, "I’d like to come out and visit with you.
I have some photographs I want to share with you,” and so on. I got on the train to Minneapolis, and then I took a bus to North Branch. I spent three days there.

**HY SCHANFIELD (as told by his daughter, Sandy Teichner, and son, Paul Schanfield)** After the war [former prisoners like] our dad took a slow ship back [from Japan]. A number of [these soldiers who had been starved] died from overeating. . . . Dad was sick ever after. He had post-traumatic stress, but [back then] they didn’t know what it was. He was on tranquilizers for years and years.

**LEON FRANKEL** [I]t’s difficult to explain . . . the emotions and excitement. I started [taking classes] at the U of MN and I started having nightmares. I’d fight every battle every night. So finally, I went to see a shrink at the U, the head of the Psychology Department.

He said, “I’ve had five hundred guys come through here this week. Let me explain something to you. You’ve just gone through three years of the most exciting thing that could ever happen to a human being and all of a sudden, boom! You’re back to so-called normal. It’s going to take you—maybe never—to rehabilitate yourself.” He said, “Get yourself a girlfriend. Get some diversions. Find something to do.” I said I was in the Reserves. He said, “Stay. Continue to fly. You love to fly. Don’t drop it.” He encouraged me to stay in the Reserves, which I loved. I was in it until I had a couple kids and my wife was starting to get nervous. One of the most traumatic experiences I had was during an attack on Okinawa. We were attacking an airfield that day. . . . I was scheduled to fly on the wing of our skipper, Byron Cook. . . . I was in the second airplane tandem right behind skipper . . . [F]or some reason or other there was one fighter of our squadron, he got out of position . . . and he ran right into my skipper’s airplane. Right in front of me. I looked up and just had time to react. We were that close. I pulled back on the stick as hard as I could, and as I went past, I could feel the heat from the two airplanes. . . . There was a big explosion . . . the flames just peeled off all the paint. It was hanging like suspended in the air. . . . I was one of the first ones that landed, and I went into the ready room to report that our skipper had just been killed along with his two crewmen. Right in front of me—there it was. Boom! . . . That would be a recurring theme all the time in my dreams. I would wake up. . . . I might have yelled out or something in my sleep. . . .

I still have them. Every once in a while, I have the craziest dreams about flying and combat and all these various other things. I still take part in the air shows. I’m called upon to speak to different groups. We start reliving some of our old experiences and somewhere in the subconscious, it starts coming to the fore, and you start remembering. . . . It stays with you; it’s too dynamic an experience to [forget].
Voices

Provided here are thumbnail sketches of the individuals whose accounts appear in this issue of *Upper Midwest Jewish History*. Included are each person’s background, branch of military service, tour of duty, significant medals (as understood through conversations either with that person or descendants), and what he or she did in the immediate postwar years. Every effort was made to verify the information presented here. J.B., L.M.S.

**HAROLD ARENSON** Born 1922, St. Paul. Attended University of Minnesota for a year. Worked at Detroit Tank Arsenal, Ann Arbor, Michigan until being drafted into Army. Served as a private first class in an antitank company of 84th Infantry Division in Northern Europe. Sustained shrapnel wounds and evacuated to England. Awarded Purple Heart. Stationed in Germany 1945. After discharge, returned to University of Minnesota and graduated with a degree in industrial engineering. Unable to find employment in that field, worked first in his father’s rug-cleaning business and then went into real estate.


**KENNETH BENDER** Born 1916, Minneapolis. Grew up in Eureka, South Dakota. Attended University of Minnesota as an undergraduate and graduated from its law school. Practiced in Rapid City, South Dakota. Enlisted in Army 1940, serving first as a private and then as a sergeant in 3rd Infantry Division. Attended officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Served in 2nd Infantry Division, rising to rank of major. Participated in D-Day Plus 1 invasion of Normandy. Wounded several times. Awarded Silver Star 1944. After the war, returned to Eureka and then worked as a Veterans Administration attorney in St. Paul. Moved to Minneapolis, obtaining a franchise to open a Federated Store there.

LAURA RAPAPORT BORSTEN  Born 1912 on a farm near Wishek, North Dakota, and grew up in that town. Graduated from University of Minnesota and then worked for the National Council of Jewish Women in New York City. Asked to join WAVES officers’ corps when that branch of the service was formed, in 1942. Served in U.S. and Hawaii, rising to rank of lieutenant and becoming a director of WAVES’ 14th Naval District. After the war, married Orin Borsten.


JOE BROCHIN  Born 1918, Minneapolis. Graduated from University of Minnesota Pharmacy School. Relinquished his deferment at the outbreak of war and entered Army. Served as a combat medic on New Caledonia and then as a private first class in combat on Leyte, where he was badly wounded. Spent 18 months recuperating. Awarded Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Worked as a pharmacist after the war.


SID FELDMAN  Born 1923, St Paul. Graduated from Humboldt High School. Drafted 1943, serving as a sergeant in 3rd Army in Europe. Fought in Battle of the Bulge. Awarded Purple Heart, and his unit received Presidential Unit Citation. After the war, bought a bakery in St. Paul and then a fruit store.

BEN FITERMAN  Born 1920, Minneapolis. Graduated from North High School. Employed at family-owned Liberty Box Company. Drafted into Army and trained as an antitank rifleman. Was a private first class in Company B, 351st Infantry, serving in the Italian campaign. Awarded Purple Heart. After discharge, returned to work at Liberty Box.


HARRY FRIEDMAN  Born 1915, Minneapolis. Graduated from University of Minnesota Medical School 1939. Enlisted in Army 1940. Served as a captain in 24th Evacuation Hospital in
France and Germany. Took part in Normandy invasion. After discharge, completed ophthalmology training and went into private practice in Minneapolis.

**ARNOLD FRISHBERG**  Born 1920, St. Paul. Attended University of Minnesota. Enlisted in Navy 1941, serving as a chief pharmacist’s mate afloat a refueling tanker in the Pacific. After the war, worked first for his father at Chaix Copley Men’s Haberdashery, St. Paul, and then at Roycraft Company, distributors of Philco products.

**JOE GARELICK**  Born 1924, St. Paul. Graduated from Humboldt High School. Enlisted in Navy for flight training but subsequently transferred to Army Air Corps. Served as a staff sergeant in 852nd Squadron, 491st Bombardment Group, in Europe. As a waist gunner and then a tail gunner, flew 34 bombing missions, 17 of which were aborted. Awarded five Air Medals. After discharge, worked as a carpenter and invented a type of metal boat ladder that he and his brother manufactured and sold.

**HOWARD GELB**  Born 1919, Poland. Grew up on Minneapolis’s North Side. Graduated from University of Minnesota Law School and was drafted. Attended officer candidate school and adjutant general school. Rose to rank of captain. Served as a ground officer in 8th Army Air Corps and as an air officer at an air base in England. Awarded Bronze Star. After the war, worked as a Veterans Administration attorney and then went into real estate.

**MOE GREEN**  Born 1919, Minneapolis. Attended high school in Appleton, Minnesota. Family moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota. Enlisted in Army. Served in 1st Infantry, 6th Division, then in Signal Corps. Took part in “third wave” D-Day assault on Utah Beach. Subsequently saw combat across Europe. Attained rank of master sergeant. Awarded Bronze Star and six battle stars. After returning from overseas, worked as an iron and metal dealer in Aberdeen and Redfield, South Dakota.

**LIONEL GREENBERG**  Born 1921, Grafton, North Dakota. Enrolled at University of Minnesota 1939. Enlisted in Army Air Corps 1942. Attended navigation school in Texas. Attained rank of second lieutenant. On a June 1944 combat mission over Germany with 459th Bomber Group, his plane was hit and he was captured. Held as a prisoner of war until late April 1945. Awarded POW medal and Air Medal. After discharge, reenrolled at University of Minnesota, earning business and law degrees. Worked for Internal Revenue Service and later as a Minnesota state appellate court appeals officer.

**BOB HARRIS**  Born 1917, Minneapolis. Earned journalism degree from University of Minnesota. Enlisted in Navy, serving as a yeoman second class on troop ship **USS General John Pope. After the war, opened a jewelry store and then started a trade journal, The Construction Bargainer.**

**DAN HEILICHER**  Born 1923, Minneapolis. Attended University of Minnesota. Enlisted in Army Air Corps. Underwent cadet training, serving as a squadron-supply officer in Europe and, in North Africa, as a first lieutenant. After the war, joined his brother in the jukebox and pinball business and then entered the record business.
MARK HERTZ  Born 1922, St Paul. Attended University of Minnesota for four quarters. Enlisted in Army Air Corps 1942. Served as a bombardier and navigator with rank of second lieutenant. Captured 1944 and held as POW in Germany until end of war. Awarded Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster. After discharge, worked in a furniture store and then started a business.

MERLE HILLIARD  Born 1921, Minneapolis. Graduated from University of Minnesota and enrolled at Harvard Business School. Commissioned an ensign in Navy Supply Corps 1942. Served as a lieutenant in the Solomon Islands, including Guadalcanal. Following the war, completed business degree, worked for Broadway department stores in southern California, and then bought an industrial-supply business.


JULES LEVIN  Born 1923, Minneapolis. Graduated from North High School. Worked as a shipping clerk at Beautycraft Supply Company, Minneapolis. Drafted into Army and assigned to 11th Armored Division (known as the “Thunderbolt” division). Served as a tank gunner in Northern Europe with the rank of corporal. After the war, attended University of Minnesota, earning a business degree. Worked as an accountant and later as a business manager at Kelco Economette Company, Minneapolis.

SIG LIEBFELD  Born 1918. Few details are known. Family had fled Europe and settled in St. Paul. He and his two brothers were killed in World War II.

MANNY MANOS  Born 1918, St. Paul. Drafted into Army after completing two years at University of Minnesota. Served as a sergeant (squad leader and radioman) with 1st Cavalry in the Philippines. After discharge, finished college and became an accountant. Practiced in St. Paul.


TED PAPERMASTER  Born 1914, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Graduated from University of Minnesota Medical School 1938. Commissioned a first lieutenant in Army Air Force Medical Corps 1942. Served in the Mediterranean 1943–45. Rose to rank of captain. Awarded Soldiers’ Medal. After the war, was an instructor in pediatrics at Louisiana State University and University of Minnesota. Opened a private practice in Minneapolis, 1948.

LEONARD PARKER  Born 1923, Poland, and named Yisroel Popuch; familiarly known as Sammy. Grew up in Milwaukee. Briefly attended University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Drafted into Army, serving in 45th Infantry (known as the “Thunderbird” division). Rose to platoon sergeant. Awarded Silver Star and Bronze Star. After discharge, graduated from University of Minnesota School of Architecture and M.I.T. Graduate School of Architecture.
Worked in Eero Saarinen’s Michigan firm for six years before returning to Minnesota to practice and teach architecture.


**SHERMAN RICHTER** Born 1924, Minneapolis. Enlisted in Marine Corps upon graduation from North High School. Served as a machine gunner in the Pacific. After the war, attended University of Minnesota for a year and then worked at Lincoln Bakery, Minneapolis. Called back to serve in Korean War and was wounded. Awarded Bronze Star, and his unit received a Presidential Unit Citation.


**MRS. MILTON (FRANCES) SADOWSKY** Sioux Falls, South Dakota, civilian.

**FANNIE SCHANFIELD** Born Minneapolis, 1916. Graduated from South High School. Wife of Private Melvin Stock of Minneapolis, who died along with hundreds of others when the ship on which he was serving as a photographer, the **uss Paul Hamilton**, was torpedoed and sank off the coast of North Africa, April 1944.


**WALTER SCHWARZ** Born 1921, Romania. Attended textile institute in Brno, Czechoslovakia. Immigrated to U.S. 1940. Drafted into Army. Served as a technical sergeant in military inte-
ligence, interrogating prisoners in Europe. After discharge, enrolled in a textile school in Lowell, Massachusetts, and later sold life insurance in Madison, Wisconsin. Retired to St. Paul.

**DAN SHINDER** Born 1911, Romania. Grew up on Minneapolis’s North Side and graduated from North High School. Enlisted in Army about 1939, serving first in Coast Artillery and then in Signal Corps. Trained on Sperry Gyroscope. Attended officer candidate school. Served in U.S. and Europe. Rose to rank of first lieutenant and was awarded medals, now lost. Was en route to Japan when atomic bomb ended the conflict. After discharge, opened a 24-hour diner in downtown Minneapolis.


**MERTON SINGER** Born 1913, Superior, Wisconsin. Graduated from West Point 1938. On D-Day was a deputy ordinance officer, Headquarters VIII Corps, in charge of helping keep U.S. divisions supplied with tanks, trucks, artillery pieces, and fire-control equipment. Was in Bastogne when German army encircled the city. Rose to rank of colonel. Awarded French Croix de Guerre with Palm and Bronze Star. Remained in Army after the war, helping develop defense plans that were used in the Korean War.

**JERRY SINYKIN** Born 1925, St. Paul. Graduated from West High School, Minneapolis. Drafted into Army and assigned to 11th Armored Division, 63rd Infantry Battalion. Served as a technical sergeant in Europe. Awarded three battle stars. After discharge, graduated from University of Minnesota Medical School and practiced in California.


**HAROLD SPECKTOR** Born 1923, St. Paul. Worked in Sausalito, California, shipyards after graduating from Humboldt High School. Enlisted in Army 1943, becoming a corporal and serving as a combat engineer with 63rd Division in Northern Europe. After the war, worked in family-owned construction business in St. Paul.

**ABE SPERLING** Born 1904, New York City. Grew up in Minneapolis. Earned engineering degree from University of Minnesota. Worked for Civilian Conservation Corps and then Toltz, King, and Day architectural and engineering firm before enlisting in Army. Served in China, helping build the Burma Road. Rose to rank of major. Awarded two Bronze Service Stars and a Victory Medal. After discharge, returned to Toltz, King, and Day and lived in Minneapolis.

BERNIE WEITZMAN  Born 1920, St. Paul. Graduated from St. Thomas Military Academy and attended University of Minnesota for two years. Worked at New Brighton Ammunition Center before enlisting in Navy. Became a radioman second class and was stationed in the Caribbean and Central America. After discharge, worked in men’s ready-to-wear clothing business and later opened a uniform store in St. Paul.


HAROLD ZATS  Born 1924, St. Paul. Graduated from Central High School. Drafted into Army and joined an Army Air Corps band as a drummer. Later worked as a parachute repairman for 57th Fighter Group. Served in the Italian campaign. Attained rank of staff sergeant. After discharge, attended University of Minnesota and then entered his family’s mobile-home business. Returned to Italy in 1951 and then opened a travel agency in St. Paul.
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**ARTICLES**


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