

GI ★ JEWS

JEWISH AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

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LONG SYNOPSIS

GI JEWS: JEWISH AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II tells the profound and unique story of the 550,000 Jewish men and women who served in World War II. Through the eyes of the servicemen and women, the film brings to life the little-known story of Jews in World War II – as active participants in the fight against Hitler, bigotry and intolerance. **GI JEWS** is Directed and Produced by Lisa Ades, Produced by Amanda Bonavita, and Written by Maia Harris.

Jewish men served in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Marines, in every theater of war. 10,000 Jewish women volunteered as WACs, WAVES and WASPs, and as nurses overseas, defying their parents' warning that the military was "no life for a nice Jewish girl."

These men and women were religious and secular, Zionists, socialists, even pacifists. Some had been in America for generations; others were recent immigrants, with close family members left behind in Hitler's Europe. Their extraordinary experiences are at the heart of the film, telling the story of World War II from a uniquely Jewish perspective.

Jewish Americans fought on two fronts: for America and for Jews worldwide. Like all Americans, they fought against fascism, but they also fought a more personal fight—to save their brethren in Europe. In the midst of it all, they battled anti-Semitism within the ranks of the U.S. military—facing slurs and violence from their fellow servicemen. New York City mayor Ed Koch, who served in the infantry, wrote later, "it wasn't only Hitler, it was here in America."

Speaking on-camera are "the greatest generation" of Jewish Americans, both famous and unknown. Writer/directors Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner tell stories of being Jewish in training with humor and pathos. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and artist Si Lewen escaped Nazi Germany as teenagers, then returned to their homeland to fight as American soldiers. Ellan Levitsky nursed the wounded after D-Day, and Lt. Lester Tanner was saved by his Protestant commanding officer in a Nazi POW camp.

The film also features the stories of Jewish veterans now deceased, including baseball star Hank Greenberg, and writers Norman Mailer, J.D. Salinger, Leon Uris and Joseph Heller, who transformed their war experiences into powerful literature.

Jewish soldiers, including Alan Moskin and Eliot Herman, were among the first to reach the concentration camps liberated by American troops. Many spoke Yiddish, so they could offer the survivors their first words of solace and comfort. In archival footage, we watch Rabbi Chaplain David Max Eichhorn arrive at Dachau, praise the survivors for their bravery and heroism, and lead them in a moving moment of prayer.

Jewish servicemen and women were changed forever by their military service and their encounter with Hitler's atrocities. Returning home, they continued to fight for the values for which they had risked their lives -- for religious freedom and civil rights in America.

In the end, the story of the Jewish GIs is the story of becoming American - the story of immigrants who earned their citizenship by shedding blood, and fought for democracy and tolerance abroad and at home.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

GI JEWS: JEWISH AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II tells the story of the 550,000 Jewish American men and women who fought in World War II. In their own words, veterans both famous and unknown (from Hollywood director Mel Brooks to former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger) bring their war experiences to life: how they fought for their nation and their people, struggled with anti-Semitism within their ranks, and emerged transformed.

FILM TEAM

Director/Producer: Lisa Ades is a documentary filmmaker who has produced and directed films for PBS and cable television for more than 25 years. Her acclaimed film *Miss America* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival before its broadcast on PBS in 2002. Previously, she produced award-winning films with Ric Burns, including *New York*, a ten-hour series, (PBS, 1999), *The Way West* (PBS, 1995), and *The Donner Party* (PBS, 1992). Other documentaries include *Beauty in a Jar* (A&E, 2003), *In the Company of Women* (IFC, 2004), and *Fabulous! The Story of Queer Cinema* (IFC, 2005). Most recently, she directed a seven-part series on the history of the Jews of Syria, *The Syrian Jewish Community: Our Journey Through History*, including an episode on WWII.

Writer: Maia Harris has written and produced documentaries for PBS for many years and has received two Emmy awards. Her previous work includes *The Italian Americans* (PBS, 2013), and *Banished* (PBS, 2008), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Other credits include *The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo* (PBS, 2005); *Beyond Tara: The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel* (AMC, 2001); *Storyville: The Naked Dance* (PBS, 1998) and *Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles* (PBS, 1995) She was the writer of *The Syrian Jewish Community: Our Journey Through History*.

Producer: Amanda Bonavita has worked in documentary film and commercial television for the past decade, most recently producing the 7-part series *The Syrian Jewish Community: Our Journey Through History*. Her previous work includes *40th Anniversary of Stonewall* (PBS, 2009) and *Waiting for Hockney* (Tribeca Film Festival, 2008).

Editor: George O'Donnell has edited numerous documentary films, including many for PBS broadcast: *The Italian Americans* (PBS, 2013), *Jackie Robinson: Part Two* (PBS, 2016), and several American Experience episodes, including *Edison* (2015), *1964* (2014), and *Panama Canal* (2011). He also edited an episode of *The Jewish Americans* (PBS, 2008) on Jewish life in America in the 1930s and 40s.

Consulting Producer: Nancy Spielberg is an award winning producer who served as consultant on the Oscar-winning documentary, *Chernobyl Heart*, and is executive producer of *Elusive Justice: The Search for Nazi War Criminals*, which aired nationally on PBS. Most recently, she produced *Above and Beyond*, winner of the audience award at more than twenty film festivals. Spielberg is the executive producer of Sophie Sartain's documentary, *Mimi and Dona* (PBS, 2015), and *On the Map* (2016), a documentary by Dani Menkin, which has received multiple festival awards around the world. She is currently executive producer of *Who Will Write Our History*, which tells the story of the secret buried archive of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Composer: Joel Goodman is an Emmy Award-winning composer who creates music for narrative feature films, documentaries, television and album releases. Joel has scored over 125 films and television programs that have received 5 Oscar nominations, 20 Emmy awards and over 30 Emmy nominations. He has scored over 40 films for HBO and composed the Main Theme for the long-running and critically acclaimed PBS series American Experience. He recently completed scores to: *Everything Is Copy* (HBO), about screenwriter Nora Ephron; *Claude Lanzmann: Spectres of the Shoah*, the Oscar-nominated documentary, and *Dirty Weekend*, directed by Neil LaBute.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2012, as I was working on a documentary on the history of the Jews of Syria (my grandfather was from Aleppo), I started speaking to Jewish Americans of Syrian descent about their experiences in World War II. Their stories were fascinating and surprising—how after Pearl Harbor they had lied about their age in order to enlist; what it meant to serve as children of immigrants; the anti-Semitism they confronted in basic training on their way to fight the Nazis; the horror of the concentration camps they liberated; and how, on their return home, they found themselves changed forever.

I knew of Deborah Dash Moore's book *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation*, inspired by her own father's service in the war, so we contacted her about making a documentary on the subject. She was delighted to come on board as a senior advisor and on-camera interview. I was surprised that even though several films had been made on aspects of Jewish Americans in WWII, no one had yet made a comprehensive documentary on the subject. Here, we would be able to tell the stories of Jews not only as victims of the war, but as Americans fighting for both their nation and their people.

The challenge was how to capture these stories while the men and women who served were still alive to tell them. In 2013, fewer than 6% of WWII veterans, mostly in their 90s, were still alive. This was our last chance to record these stories, so we appealed to the NEH, who had awarded us development and production grants, to release "emergency funds" to begin interviewing. Remarkably, our first day of shooting in December 2014 was at 92-year old Carl Reiner's house in Beverly Hills. A gentleman and a mensch, he sat for an interview and then allowed us to interview his close friend and fellow GI Jew Mel Brooks there that same afternoon. It was an auspicious start to the project.

Now, three years later, I have interviewed nearly 40 Jewish veterans on-camera. Bea Cohen was 104 when we interviewed her. I tenaciously pursued Harold Baumgarten, the GI who drew a Star of David and the words "Bronx, NY" on the back of his field jacket before D-Day. Despite his protests, having recently suffered a minor stroke, he relented and finally agreed to an interview. His description of being shot five times on Omaha Beach and praying on D-Day is extraordinary. Both Bea and Harold have since passed away, along with Pobie Johnston ("well, they didn't get this one"), and artist Si Lewen, who described being devastated by what he saw at Buchenwald upon its liberation—one of the most powerful and moving moments of the film. I am so grateful that they shared their stories with me, and it is to them that I dedicate this film.

Today, with the rise of white supremacists, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States and throughout the world, these stories of the children of Jewish immigrants fighting anti-Semitism at home in order to fight it abroad—and thereby becoming more American and Jewish in the process—resonates profoundly for me. Over the course of making *GI JEWS*, I have learned from this "greatest generation" of American men and women what it means to be both Jewish and American—and that the fight against nativist intolerance and for equality is never really over.

INTERVIEWS

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

Leonard Everett Fisher
Army – Cartographer

Art Sherman
Army Air Corps – Bombardier

Paul Cohen
Army – Forward Observer

Irwin Stovroff
Army Air Corps – Bombardier

Deborah Dash Moore
Historian

Mel Brooks
Army - Combat Engineer

Sam Kessler
Army Air Corps -
Radio Operator

Carl Reiner
Army – Special Services

Mimi Rivkin
Army – Photo Lab Technician

Peter Selz
Army – Office of Strategic
Services

Henry Kissinger
Army – Counterintelligence

Si Lewen
Army – Counterintelligence

Maurice ‘Chic’ Paper
Army – Combat Engineer

Sid Shanken
Army Air Corps –
Bombardier-Navigator

Robert M. Morgenthau
Navy – Exec. Officer
& Navigator

Elihu Rose
Historian

Alan Moskin
Army – Infantry

Bea Abrams Cohen
Army – Communications

Ellan Levitsky Orkin
Army – Nurse

Dahlia ‘Pobie’ Johnston
Army – Personnel Officer

Eliot S. Hermon
Army – Forward Observer

Max Fuchs
Army – Infantry

Jack Pathman
Army Air Corps – Instructor

Mildred Landis
Army – Nurse

Jonathan D. Sarna
Historian

Mark S. Zaid
Attorney

Harold ‘Hal’ Baumgarten
Army – infantry

Paul Cohen
Army – Forward Observer

Art Sherman
Army Air Corps – Bombardier

Michael Rugel
National Museum of American
Jewish Military History

Leah Garrett
Historian

Harry Corre
Army – Artillery

Albert Horowitz
Army – Infantry

Morton D. Brooks
Army – Infantry

INTERVIEW BIOGRAPHIES

Harold 'Hal' Baumgarten landed at the Normandy beachhead on D-Day, wearing a flak jacket he had painted with a Jewish star and the words, "Bronx, NY." He barely survived that day, and was wounded five times. After the war, and many reconstructive surgeries, he decided to become a doctor himself, so he could save people's lives. He is the author of *Eyewitness on Omaha Beach* and *D-Day Survivor: An Autobiography*, and some of his experiences were incorporated into the film *Saving Private Ryan*. He resided in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, before his death in 2016.

Mel Brooks, then Melvin Kaminsky, grew up in Brooklyn. He enlisted in the Army and served as a forward artillery observer and a combat engineer in Europe, where he deactivated land mines. His three older brothers, Irving, Lenny and Bernie, also served in the war. After the war, he became a television writer, often collaborating with his best friend, Carl Reiner. For many years, Brooks had considered the idea of writing a musical comedy about Adolf Hitler, and it finally came to fruition as his first feature film, *The Producers*, in 1968. The film's biting satire sparked great controversy, and it went on to win an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, becoming an underground hit, and later a successful Broadway musical. He currently lives in Los Angeles.

Morton D. Brooks, from Brooklyn, NY, served in the infantry and was captured by the Nazis at the Battle of the Bulge. Segregated from the other prisoners because he was Jewish, Brooks was sent to Berga, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, which was a Nazi slave labor camp. Brooks tells a little-known chapter in the history of World War II, the story of 350 American servicemen, mostly Jews or "suspected Jews," who were forced to endure concentration camp conditions at Berga. Sent there to dig underground tunnels for an ammunition factory, most of the prisoners were worked to death, and Brooks was one of only 63 men to survive. He currently resides in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Bea Abrams Cohen, an immigrant from Romania, grew up in Los Angeles, and enlisted in the U.S. Army to pay back the country that took her in. She served in England, working in communications with top-secret documents. After the war, she was an active member of the Jewish War Veterans in southern California, as well as numerous charities and veterans organizations - helping veterans from all wars. When she was interviewed for this film she was 104, the oldest living female veteran in California. She passed away one year later in 2015.

Paul Cohen, raised in Chicago, served as an infantryman in the Pacific. As a forward observer, he went ashore in the first wave on Leyte Island and fought in the invasion of Okinawa. After experiencing anti-Semitism from his fellow servicemen during basic training, Cohen worked hard to defy the stereotypes of Jews as cowardly and weak. During combat in the Philippines, he rescued his wounded commanding officer from a burning village, and earned a Bronze Star for bravery. After the war, he became an active member of the Jewish War Veterans.

Harry Corre enlisted in the U.S. Army before the attack on Pearl Harbor and was sent to serve in the Philippines. Stationed in Corregidor, he was captured by the Japanese and taken on the Bataan Death March. After seeing many of his fellow soldiers shot by the Japanese, he escaped -- only to be captured again and imprisoned in a POW camp. He spent four years there, in charge of a burial detail. He now lives in Los Angeles where he works as a patient advocate at the VA Medical Center and a service officer for the American Ex-Prisoners of War.

Leonard Everett Fisher grew up in Coney Island. Before the war, even as a boy, he was fully aware of Hitler's threat. In 1937, he watched the Hindenberg floating over New York, saw the swastika on its side, and threw rocks at it. He enlisted in the Army after Pearl Harbor, was recruited for a top-secret topographical unit, and served in North Africa and Hawaii, making maps of enemy territory. After the war, he became a successful author and illustrator of books for young people, and he currently resides in Westport, Connecticut.

Max Fuchs emigrated to the U.S. from Poland with his family at the age of 12. Raised in an Orthodox family, he was studying to be a cantor when America entered the war. He fought in the Army infantry in the European theater, and became an assistant chaplain. In 1944, he served as cantor for the first Jewish service to be held on German soil since the rise of Hitler, broadcast on NBC radio in Germany and across the United States. After the war, he became a diamond cutter in New York City, and continued to serve as a cantor throughout his life.

Leah Garrett is the Loti Smorgon Research Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life and Culture at Monash University in Australia, and the author of *Young Lions: How Jewish Authors Re-invented the American War Novel*. Her research focuses on the relationship between Yiddish, English, German and Hebrew literature and the modern world, and she teaches courses on 20th century American literature. Her other work includes *Journeys Beyond The Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing In The Modern World*, *The Cross And Other Jewish Stories By Lamed Shapiro* and *A Knight At The Opera: Heine, Wagner, Herzl, Pertz and the Legacy of Der Tannhauser*.

Eliot S. Hermon grew up in Brooklyn and was the seventh generation of his family to serve in the U.S. military. He served in field artillery in France, Germany, Austria and Belgium, including the Battle of the Bulge. In April 1945, he was among the first American troops to liberate a concentration camp -- Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald. Returning home, he resolved to deepen his commitment to Judaism and pass its traditions on to his children. He also joined the National Guard and remained in military service until his retirement. He currently resides in Rockland County, NY.

Albert Horowitz grew up in the Bronx and served in the 343rd Infantry Battalion, fighting in Belgium, Holland and Germany. His brother Bernard, was a commander of a tank battalion, who earned two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star, and was killed in combat in Germany near the Rhine River. Horowitz currently resides in New Jersey with his wife of 65 years

Dahlia "Pobie" Johnston grew up in Philadelphia, and joined the WAACs in 1942, two days after her 21st birthday. She served stateside, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where she was promoted to Sargeant and put in charge of discharging personnel. Her brother, who also served, was killed in a bombing raid over Germany. After the war, she settled in Stamford, CT, where she became active in the Democratic Party, and ran for mayor three times.

Sam Kessler was born in Poland and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He served in the Army Air Corps as a radio operator on a bomber called the Pale Ale. One day, on his way to bomb munitions factories in Nuremberg, his plane had mechanical difficulties. He managed to parachute out and found himself caught on a church steeple in Belgium. Hanging there, he said the traditional Jewish mourners' Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. Remarkably, he was rescued, returned to his unit and flew several more missions before returning home. After the war, he became a successful businessman and now resides in Boynton Beach, Florida.

Henry Kissinger, a refugee from Nazi Germany, emigrated to the United States in 1938 at 15 years old, and settled with his family in Washington Heights in Manhattan. He was drafted in 1943 and served in the Army infantry as a rifleman. After several months, he was recruited into counterintelligence because of his knowledge of German language and culture. In this capacity, Kissinger served in headquarters during the Battle of the Bulge, interrogating German prisoners of war and identifying German spies disguised as Americans. After V-E Day, he was instrumental in the de-Nazification of Germany, supervising the occupying government of the town of Hanover. He found out later that thirteen members of his family, unable to leave Germany, had died at Auschwitz. Kissinger went on to serve as the U.S. Secretary of State from 1973 to 1977.

Mildred Landis grew up in Chicago and became a WAAC, where she cared for returning wounded soldiers, as a nurse in a hospital in California. Her older brother also served and died in a German POW camp. Landis left the service after a year to care for her grieving mother but continued to volunteer in a general hospital after the war was over. She currently resides in southern California.

Si Lewen fled Nazi Germany as a teenager and studied art in New York City. He enlisted in the Army and fought in Europe in a counter-intelligence unit made up of émigré European Jews, fluent in German, who were trained in psychological warfare. Going back to his homeland as an American G.I., his job was to convince German soldiers to surrender. He witnessed the Buchenwald concentration camp soon after its liberation and was devastated by the experience. After the war, Lewen resumed making art in the United States, incorporating his experiences of the war and the Holocaust into his work. Towards the end of his life, Lewen joined forces with cartoonist Art Spiegelman to re-publish his early work, *The Parade*. Lewen passed away in 2016 in his home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Deborah Dash Moore is a leading authority on Jewish Americans in World War II and the author of *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (2004). She is currently the Frederick C. L. Huetwell Professor of History at the University of Michigan and Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. She served as senior advisor to the project.

Robert M. Morgenthau enlisted in the Navy before the attack on Pearl Harbor, and served in the North and South Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific Theater, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Commander. The son of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr., he survived the explosion of the battleship *U.S.S. Lansdale* and volunteered to serve another term. After the war, he became an attorney and prosecutor, serving as the Manhattan District Attorney from 1975 until 2009 at age 90. He is Chairman Emeritus of the Museum of Jewish Heritage -- A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, and currently "of counsel" at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz in NYC.

Alan Moskin was raised in New Jersey and served in the Army infantry in France, Germany and Austria. In 1945, he was a liberator at Gunkirschen Lager, a subcamp of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. 18 years old at the time, he spoke Yiddish, and was able to communicate with the survivors. After the war, he became an attorney, and after 50 years of silence, he began to speak publicly about the war and the Holocaust. At the age of 91, he still travels the country sharing his experiences with community groups and schools.

Ellan Levitsky Orkin and her sister Dorothy, children of immigrants, grew up in Salem, New Jersey, and enlisted together as nurses in the Army. They were stationed in France during the bitterly cold

winter of 1944, and helped care for the terrible casualties from the Battle of the Bulge. For their dedicated service, both sisters received the American Theater Ribbon and the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Campaign Ribbon. After the war, both continued their nursing careers at civilian hospitals. Ellan currently resides in Milford, Delaware.

Maurice 'Chic' Paper grew up in an orthodox home in Baltimore, MD and had joined the Maryland State Guard before the U.S. entered the war. Soon after Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the Army and served in North Africa as a liaison officer to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and later became company commander for an Engineering regiment, serving in Europe. After the liberation of Paris, he looked for his long-lost French relatives, only to discover that many had been murdered by the Nazis. In April 1945, he was among the liberators of the Dachau concentration camp.

Jack Pathman served stateside in the Army Air Corps, as well as in defense plants. His two brothers also served. Pathman was trained as a radio operator, served as an instructor, and later produced USO shows to entertain the troops. He is active in the Jewish War Veterans in California.

Carl Reiner was raised in the Bronx, NY, and was drafted in 1943. He trained in the Signal Corps as a radio and teleprinter operator. An entertainer before the war, he was soon transferred to the Special Services entertainment unit. For two years, he traveled around the Pacific theater, performing for troops in Hawaii, Guam, Saipan and Iwo Jima. After the war, Reiner performed in Broadway musicals and television comedy, eventually teaming up with Mel Brooks. The duo became famous for their skit, *2000 Year Old Man*, with Reiner as the straight man. He went on to a decades-long career as a television and film director, including *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and four movies starring comedian Steve Martin. He continues to write novels and personal memoirs, and currently lives in Los Angeles, where, at 95, he is one of the oldest celebrities active on Twitter.

Mimi Rivkin grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and experienced anti-Semitism as a young girl. She enlisted in the Army without telling her parents, and served as in the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WACs) in the China-Burma-India Theater as a photographer and photo lab technician. While overseas, she dated a non-Jewish serviceman, who broke off the relationship after finding out that she was Jewish. Also an accomplished artist, she keeps a scrapbook of her cartoons about military life. She currently resides in a veterans retirement home in Washington, D.C.

Elihu Rose is an independent scholar and historian of World War II, as well as a real estate developer and philanthropist. He has taught military history at New York University, Yale University, Columbia University and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He joined the U.S. Air Force in 1954 and fought in Korea, and his older brother, Frederic, served in World War II in the U.S. Navy Seabees.

Michael Rugel is Programs and Content Coordinator at the National Museum of American Jewish Military History in Washington, D.C. For many years, he has gathered and curated records, artifacts and stories of Jewish servicemen and women who fought in the U.S. military from the American Revolution to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Jonathan D. Sarna is the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and Chief Historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History. He has written, edited, or co-edited more than thirty books on Jewish culture and history, and is one of the nation's leading commentators on American Jewish life. He also served as an advisor to the project.

Peter Selz was born in Munich and fled Nazi Germany as a teenager, leaving his family behind. He was drafted in 1942 and served in the Signal Corps, then recruited for military intelligence, joining the Office of Special Services, as an interrogator, but the war ended before his training was completed. An art historian after the war, he was chief curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, then a Professor of the History of Art at the University of California Berkeley, where he currently resides.

Sid Shanken grew up in San Antonio, Texas and enlisted in the Army immediately after Pearl Harbor. He served as a bombardier-navigator in North Africa, Italy and the European theater, flying 54 missions. On Yom Kippur, 1943, he was attending services in Sicily when a crew member told him he was scheduled to fly -- he left the synagogue and took to the skies, deeply saddened to be bombing on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. After the war, determined to restore his people's faith, he became a rabbi, and also became active in the civil rights movement, marching in Selma and Birmingham alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He currently lives in Florida.

Art Sherman grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and in 1942, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Refusing to serve as a flight instructor, he went overseas as a bombardier with the 464th bomb group in Italy, and flew 20 missions until he was wounded and could no longer fly. He continued to serve as an intelligence officer with the 5th Wing, on the ground in Italy, until the end of the war. He is active with the Jewish War Veterans.

Irwin Stovroff was raised in Buffalo, New York in a reformed Jewish family. He enlisted soon after Pearl Harbor and became a bombardier on a B-24 Liberator, in the 44th Bomb Group in the 8th Air Force. On his 35th mission, an effort to destroy the bridges the Germans still held, he was shot down over Germany, captured by the Nazis and held in a POW camp for a year. Currently a resident of Boca Raton, Florida, he runs a foundation that pairs wounded veterans with service dogs.

Lester Tanner grew up in the Bronx and at 18 went into the service, in the infantry. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was taken prisoner by Nazi forces. At the POW camp, when a German officer ordered all of the Jewish servicemen to identify themselves, Tanner's Protestant commanding officer, Roddie Edmonds, refused to allow it. Lining up all of his 1275 men in formation, he announced that "we are all Jews here," saving Tanner, and 200 other Jewish soldiers, from possible murder by the Nazis. After the war, Tanner went to law school on the G.I. Bill and became an attorney in a law firm in New York City. He is now friends with Roddie Edmond's son, Chris Edmonds, a Baptist minister from Tennessee.

Mark S. Zaid, an attorney in Washington DC, is the grandson of Rabbi Chaplain David Max Eichhorn, and the editor of *The GIs' Rabbi: World War II Letters of David Max Eichhorn*. Rabbi Eichhorn served in the European theater, landing in Normandy in the weeks after D-Day. He traveled through France as it was liberated from the Nazis, searching for surviving Jews, and the remains of synagogues and sacred Jewish objects that had been desecrated by the Nazis. He arrived in Dachau soon after its liberation and tended to the survivors' spiritual needs, including leading them in a religious service -- this moving and powerful moment was captured on film by the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Zaid speaks frequently about his grandfather's contribution to the war effort.

ADVISORS

Deborah Dash Moore is a leading authority on Jewish Americans in World War II and the author of *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (2004). She is currently the Frederick C. L. Huetwell Professor of History at the University of Michigan and Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. She served as senior advisor to the project, in addition to appearing on camera in the film.

Richard Alba is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His books include *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (1990); and *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (2003).

Deborah E. Lipstadt is Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, where she founded the Institute for Jewish Studies. A leading authority on the American response to the Holocaust, she is the author of *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (1986, 1993), and *The Eichmann Trial* (2011).

Donald L. Miller is the John Henry MacCracken Professor of History at Lafayette College. His books include *D-Days in the Pacific* (2004); *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* (2007); and *The Story of World War II* (2001). He has collaborated on more than 40 television productions, including *The Pacific* (HBO, 2010), produced by Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg.

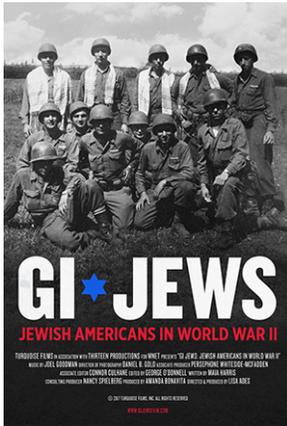
Allan R. Millett is Stephen E. Ambrose Professor of History and Director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans. A retired colonel of the Marine Corps Reserve, he is senior military advisor at The National World War II Museum. He is the author of seven books, including *A War To Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (2000).

Jonathan D. Sarna is the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and Chief Historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History. He has written, edited, or co-edited more than thirty books on Jewish culture and history, and is one of the nation's leading commentators on American Jewish life. He also appears on-camera in the film.

Beth S. Wenger is Professor of History and Director of the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (1996), and *The Jewish Americans: Three Centuries of Jewish Voices in America* (2007), the companion volume to the six-hour PBS series.

James E. Young is Distinguished University Professor Emeritus and Founding Director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide and Memory Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has written widely on the Holocaust, memorials, and national memory, including *The Texture of Memory* (1993), *At Memory's Edge* (2000), and *The Stages of Memory* (2016).

IMAGES FOR DOWNLOAD



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GI JEWS logo

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Director Headshot

Filename: AdesLisaDirectorHeadshot

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Mel Brooks, then Melvin Kaminsky, at age 19. c.1944

Source: Brooksfilm Limited

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Carl Reiner in the U.S. Army.
c.1943-1944

Source: Carl Reiner

Filename: 4121_Reiner

[Download Image](#)



Carl Reiner with his parents,
Bess and Irving Reiner.
c. 1943-1944

Source: Carl Reiner

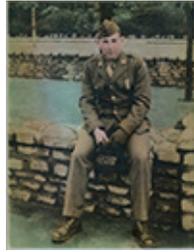
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Carl Reiner at the GI JEWS interview. He is holding up his dog tags, which were marked 'H' for Hebrew.

Source: Carl Reiner
Filename: 3868_Reiner
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Harold "Hal" Baumgarten in Torquay, England, age 19. Before D-Day, where he was wounded 5 times and survived.

Source: Harold "Hal" Baumgarten
Filename: 4321_Baumgarten
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Liberator Alan Moskin, 18 years old. Camp Blanding, Florida.

Source: Alan Moskin
Filename: 4570_Moskin
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Norman Mailer. c.1944

Source: Barbara Mailer
Filename: 7341_Mailer
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Max Fuchs singing in Aachen, Germany during the first Jewish service to be held on German soil since the rise of Hitler.

Oct. 29, 1944
Source: Max Fuchs
Filename: 4260_Fuchs
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Robert M. Morgenthau, who served in the Navy for four and a half years. c.1944

Source: Robert M. Morgenthau
Filename: 4092_MorgenthauShip
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Bea Abrams Cohen, a WAAC, official army photo. c. 1943

Source: Bea Abrams Cohen
Filename: 4038_CohenB
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Dog tags of Max Fuchs showing "H" for Hebrew

Source: Max Fuchs
Filename: 4262_FuchsDogtags
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Robert M. Morgenthau in training (Navy).

Source: Robert M. Morgenthau
Filename: 7045_Morgenthau
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German émigré/artist Si Lewen, who returned to Germany as an American G.I. c. 1942

Source: Si Lewen
Filename: 4294_Lewen

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Si Lewen at his GI JEWS interview, surrounded by his artwork, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Lewen_PS

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Rabbi Chaplain David Max Eichhorn performing a Jewish service in the Zeppelin Stadium in Nuremberg. Germany, April, 1945

Source: Mark S. Zaid
Filename: 5017

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Rabbi Chaplain Robert Marcus with Jewish soldiers. 1944

Source: Tamara Green and Roberta Marcus

Filename: 4478_Marcus

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Men at Rosh Hashana Eve services, 329th Infantry. France, 1944

Source: National Museum of American Jewish Military History

Filename: 6149_Service

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Jewish soldier with a survivor who was just liberated. 1945

Source: National Museum of American Jewish Military History

Filename: 7619_Liberation

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American Jewish soldiers. c. 1945

Source: National Museum of American Jewish Military History

Filename: 7331_Field

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Men seated on benches for Jewish service. Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. 1944

Source: National Museum of American Jewish Military History

Filename: 6155_ServiceNG

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Group around Jewish chaplain's flag, Written on back: "end of war for 104th Inf. 1945."

Source: National Museum of American Jewish

Military History

Filename: 7601_Flag

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Henry Kissinger, former U.S. Secretary of State, at his GI JEWS interview, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Kissinger_PS

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Morton D. Brooks, survivor of the Nazi slave labor camp, Berga, and Irwin Stovroff, who was also a POW, on the day of their interviews for GI JEWS, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: BrooksStovroff_PS

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Producer Amanda Bonavita and Ellan Levistky Orkin looking at Ellan's photos and memorabilia from her service as an Army nurse, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Orkin_PS

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Lester Tanner at his GI JEWS interview. His Protestant commanding officer had refused to identify his Jewish soldiers after they were captured during the Battle of the Bulge. 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Tanner_PS

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Eliot S. Hermon, a concentration camp liberator, at his GI JEWS interview, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Hermon_PS

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Sid Shanken, who became a rabbi after the war and was active in the civil rights movement, at his GI JEWS interview, 2016

Source: Turquoise Films
Filename: Shanken_PS

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TRAILER



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