

MEN of GOODWILL

Men like Herman Lash, handsome and refined, who was born in Detroit and attended Northern High School. He joined the service on Sept. 6, 1943, and died in Luxembourg.

The photos hang on the walls in the shrine and rest in a large book, a page of which is turned every day so the names and faces will be remembered, if just for 24 hours each year.

JWV Commander Katz sees a picture of his pal, Abraham Kadish. "There wasn't anything he wouldn't do for you," he says.

Bernard Gross turns to a photograph of his friend and slain soldier Morton Gottlieb, "the class leader, one of the guys everybody looked to," and another of Joseph Bale, a sports star he watched play basketball.

"I went to school with a lot of these guys," Mr. Gross says. "I always thought they just went on, got jobs, married.

"Then you see them here. God, your heart drops."

Ely Katz, who keeps an American flag on his desk at the JWV office, was born in Wisconsin and came to Michigan in 1922 with his parents. He served in the National Guard and in September 1940, was assigned to the Aleutian Islands and the Soviet Union.

Mr. Katz was in the service for more than five years. He remembers when Japanese submarines chased the ship on which he worked. Once, his ship was attacked by the enemy air force.

"We fired at them," he says. "They never did come back."

Affiliated with Bloch-Rose Post, Mr. Katz has been involved with the JWV since he left active duty.

As head of the Michigan JWV, Mr. Katz speaks with pride of the organization's focus: helping veterans of every race and religion.

"There's no discrimination," he says. "We work with everybody."

Jack Schwartz, who served in the Air Force during World War II, also feels strongly about the JWV's work with all veterans.

"The most important thing we've done is to form a liaison with other vets in the state," Mr. Schwartz says. "Just recently the state commander of the American Legion in Michigan — which has 80,000 vets — came to one of our events, just a small Jewish convention.

"And we can always go to the State of Michigan Veterans and say, 'We need help. We work together.'"

Mr. Schwartz, chief of staff for the Michigan JWV, was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. He was drafted in 1942, working as an airplane mechanic and crew chief on the B-17 bomber.

When his superiors discovered he held an accounting degree, Mr. Schwartz was shipped off to Detroit, where he headed a staff arranging for payments of government contracts. He met his future wife at a cafe and decided to stay in the city.

Mr. Schwartz has been active in the JWV since he left the service in 1946. He has

Machpelah is one of eight local cemeteries where Jewish vets are buried. The JWV has decorated the graves of Jewish soldiers at all eight.

The graves, many for men who died in their early 20s, often bear flowers and a few last, tender words: "Everybody who knew him loved him," reads one tombstone; "Dear son and brother," says another.

A few graves show nothing more than the name, date of birth and death. The JWV flag is the only testimony that the men are still remembered.

Two days each May, Jewish war veterans sell plastic poppies throughout the metropolitan area, with funds raised going to several projects including the flag holders.

Ely Katz starts selling poppies at 6 a.m. Thursday and doesn't stop until just before sundown Friday. "I do it because it has to be done and because it's a good cause," he says. He regularly collects between \$1,800 and \$2,200.

The JWV has used some of the money earned from selling poppies to decorate the graves of 1,500 men, Mr. Katz says. "And we're still dying off every day now."

In addition to the flags on their graves, the dead men are commemorated through the use of their names. It's almost overwhelming, this profusion of names. Rooms in the JWV building are named for soldiers; the shrine bears the name of Raymond Zussman, a World War II Congressional Medal of Honor winner. Lodge names recall slain men, and members are quick to tell the history of their lodge



held every position with the organization, helped buy the building the JWV calls home and was named Michigan veteran of the year for 1989. He's also president of the Joint Memorial Day Association, which secures flags for graves of all veterans buried in Oakland and Wayne County.

The idea for the flag holders was Mr. Schwartz's. He remembers years ago standing in a cemetery during a storm. He noticed bronze plaques on the tombstones of WWI veterans and thought, "Wouldn't it be great if we had one of those for every vet?"

Now, on a rainy summer day at Machpelah Cemetery, numerous flags, affixed to bronze-colored holders bearing the JWV logo, wave slowly, quietly in the wind.

Michael Bennett: "If you're living in a free country, you have obligations."

name.

"I'm a member of Silverman Detroit Lodge #135," Jack Schwartz announces. "It was named in honor of Eddie Silverman. He was killed in World War II, one of the first to die. He's buried at Machpelah."

Bernard Gross belongs to Charles Shapiro Post #510. "He died in a bombing run in Germany," he says of Mr. Shapiro. "His body was never found."

"We've had so many of our fellows killed in all the wars," Mr. Katz says. "We're never going to neglect our comrades. We take care of them when they're dead and when they're alive, and we're proud of that."

Since its establishment, the JWV has been active in numerous political activities. In 1933, it became the