



Chaplain Morris Adler — rabbi of Congregation Shaarey Zedek — reads a ketuba at a wedding in the Western Pacific as Staff Sergeant Harry Becker marries Corporal Evelyn M. Cowan, March 1945.

from their senior officers. The *American Jewish Yearbook* of 1900 listed the names and service affiliations of Jewish enlistees in the Spanish-American War. In 1896, 78 Jewish veterans of the Union army formed what is known today as the Jewish War Veterans.

As the presence of Jews in the armed forces increased, accommodations were asked for and granted pertaining to Jewish holidays and religious needs. Just before World War I, a survey indicated that while Jews were 2 percent of the population, they comprised 6 percent of the military force.



From *The Fighting Rabbis*  
From George Washington's early support for a religiously tolerant military to a seder held in the desert sands of Kuwait.

While Rabbi,

Isaac Landman provided civilian rabbinic coverage to 2,000 Jewish men serving in the Mexico-Texas border area in 1916; the National Jewish Welfare Board did not succeed in gaining sanction for Jewish military chaplains until the first group of 25 rabbis was appointed to active duty in 1917. The JWB, the "official agency for Jewish welfare work in the military camps of the United States," estimated that more than 5,000 Jews were in the military by 1919.

Starting with World War II, the chaplaincy program has experienced growth. Slomovitz discusses the work of chaplains serving Jewish military person-

nel during the Korean, Vietnam and Gulf wars.

The first Jewish woman chaplain to serve on active duty was student Rabbi Julie Schwartz, who began serving in the Navy in 1985 with her husband, Steven Ballaban, also a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College's Jewish Institute of Religion. The Orthodox contingent on the JWB, however, would not endorse a female rabbi as a military chaplain. This led to the establishment of the new JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, which allows each stream of Judaism to endorse its own chaplains for the military. □

# Women Warriors

*A new exhibit in Washington, D.C., examines Jewish women's roles in the military.*

SARAH GORDON  
*Special to the Jewish News*

**T**he history of women in the U.S. military dates back to the Civil War, when Roman Catholic nuns boarded hospital ships to assist the wounded. Women also were known to have fought in combat situations disguised as men. During the Spanish-American War, the first trained nurses joined the U.S. Navy in an unofficial capacity.

In 1942, Congress approved the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), which one year later became the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and was officially established as part of the Army. But it took until the fall of 1978, when President Jimmy Carter signed a congressional act disestablishing the Women's Army Corps, that women were fully integrated into the American armed forces.

"Women in the Military: A Jewish Perspective," currently on view at the National Museum of American Jewish Military History in Washington, D.C., highlights the vital role played by Jewish women in the military. The idea for the exhibition came about in 1991 when curator Sandor Cohen held a brainstorming session with then-curator Leslie M. Freudenheim, just as the Women's Memorial was

*Sarah Gordon is a University of Michigan graduate and freelance writer in Washington, D.C.*



Above: Army nurse Gertrude Shapiro at the U.S. Air Base on Tinian during World War II. Shapiro was sent to Hiroshima, Japan, as part of the first medical landing group of Americans assigned to treat Japanese patients suffering the effects of the atomic bomb.

being planned and eventually built at nearby Arlington National Cemetery.

Cohen began gathering stories, photographs and memorabilia from Jewish female war veterans and delved into records from the Department of the Army and the National Archives.

Says Cohen: "This is the culmination of what we considered the cream of the crop — the most exciting, interesting stories."

Although the stories of women in the military began over a century ago, the bulk of the resulting exhibition dates from World War II.

While depicting women outfitted in the colors of army green and khaki, with accents of Red Cross red, the photographs and wall text of "Women in the Military: A Jewish Perspective" are not charged with strong visual impact (most are snapshots and class portraits preserved over the years). But the personal stories of dedication and bravery are stirring accounts of the experiences, progress and dedication of Jewish women in the military.

Clarice Fortang, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was stationed at an office in St.

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Celebrating its 10th year, the *National Memorial Day Concert 1999* salutes veterans with a special program 8 p.m. Sunday, May 30, on Detroit Public Television, WTVS-Channel 56. The special features Gen. Colin Powell, Charles Durning, Rita Moreno and others performing with the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of pops conductor Erich Kunzel. Cable channel TNT presents a Memorial Day weekend tribute with a presentation of classic war movies

beginning 12 p.m. Saturday, May 29, and running through Monday evening, May 31. TNT will cover the third annual National Moment of Remembrance at 3 p.m. Monday, May 31. A Civil War re-enactor will play "Taps" on the Gettysburg battlefield, with the notes being echoed by a Vietnam veteran at a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, "The Wall That Heals," currently on display in Gettysburg. Check your local cable listings.