

SPEECH TO B'NAI ISRAEL SYNAGOGUE

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

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VETERANS DAY DINNER SPEECH

BY

MAJ. GEN. ALPHONSA 'AL' GILLEY USAR RET.

SYNAGOGUE PRESIDENT JUDGE MARCI GOODMAN, MEN'S CLUB PRESIDENT, JERRY GORDON, RABBI ISRAEL VANA, B'NAI ISRAEL CONGREGATION, AND GUESTS, IT IS INDEED AN HONOR TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BE YOUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER ON SUCH A SPECIAL OCCASION, YOUR ANNUAL VETERANS DAY DINNER. I WANT TO ESPECIALLY THANK MY ROTARIAN FRIEND FRANK KAYE, FOR ASKING ME TO SPEAK AND RECOMMENDING ME TO THE EVENT PLANNERS. IN MY 38 YEARS OF MILITARY SERVICE AND MY PAST FIVE YEARS IN LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICE, I HAVE GIVEN SPEECHES TO MANY AUDIENCES, BUT THIS IS MY FIRST SPEECH IN A SYNAGOGUE AND I CHERISH THE MOMENT AND THANK ALL OF YOU FOR THIS WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE.

VETERANS DAY AND VETERANS DAY CELEBRATIONS ARE EXTREMELY SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT EVENTS, PARTICULARLY IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, THAT OWE SO MUCH TO PATRIOTIC MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED, DURING WARTIME AND PEACE, THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY, MANY MAKING THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE, TO WIN AND GUARANTEE THE MANY FREEDOMS THAT WE ENJOY EACH DAY, FREEDOMS THAT SOME OF US TAKE FOR GRANTED.

A NUMBER OF AMERICANS GET THE PURPOSE OF VETERANS DAY AND MEMORIAL DAY CONFUSED. MEMORIAL DAY IS SET ASIDE ON THE LAST MONDAY IN MAY TO HONOR THOSE VETERANS WHO DIED IN SERVICE TO

AMERICA OR FROM INJURIES RECEIVED DURING BATTLE. ALTHOUGH WE INCLUDE DECEASED VETERANS IN OUR VETERANS DAY CELEBRATIONS, THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF VETERANS DAY, CELEBRATED ON NOVEMBER 11TH EACH YEAR, IS TO THANK AND RECOGNIZE OUR LIVING VETERANS WHO SERVED OR ARE SERVING WITH HONOR IN OUR MILITARY IN WARTIME AND PEACETIME.

INSPIRED BY THIS SPECIAL OCCASION AND THE PROSPECT OF ADDRESSING THIS AUDIENCE, I DECIDED TO FOCUS MY SPEECH TONIGHT ON THE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS OF JEWISH AMERICANS TO OUR MILITARY FOR NEARLY 350 YEARS, MAGNIFICENT CONTRIBUTIONS THAT ARE NOT WELL KNOWN IN OUR SOCIETY.

IN 1654, A GROUP OF JEWISH REFUGEES FLEEING PERSECUTION IN BRAZIL, STARTED THE FIRST JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA IN NEW AMSTERDAM (WHICH LATER BECAME NEW YORK CITY). BUT EVEN IN THAT AMERICAN COLONY, THEY CONTINUED TO BE PERSECUTED AND HARASSED.

ALTHOUGH THEY WANTED TO SERVE IN THE VOLUNTEER HOME GUARD, THESE JEWISH IMMIGRANTS WERE BARRED FROM DOING SO BY THE COLONIAL COUNCIL AND INSTEAD WERE HIT WITH A SPECIAL TAX TO PAY FOR OTHERS TO SERVE IN THEIR PLACE. IN NOVEMBER 1655, ASSER LEVY PETITIONED THE COLONIAL COURT TO ALLOW JEWISH CITIZENS TO STAND WATCH WITH THE OTHER CITIZENS OR REMOVE THE SPECIAL TAX. AFTER A TWO YEAR LEGAL BATTLE, LEVY WON THE RIGHT FOR JEWISH CITIZENS TO

SERVE IN THE VOLUNTEER HOME GUARD, AND JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE CONTINUED TO SERVE AND FIGHT WITH HONOR IN OUR MILITARY THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY. IT'S A SHAME THAT THERE ARE STILL THOSE, WHO CONTINUE TO CLAIM, THAT JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE PARTICIPATED VERY LITTLE IN OUR MILITARY. THAT'S THE FURTHEST FROM THE TRUTH. JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE SERVED IN OUR MILITARY WITH DISTINCTION FROM OUR INFANCY DAYS AS A NATION THROUGH OUR CURRENT WAR AGAINST TERRORISM.

I DO NOT HAVE NEARLY ENOUGH TIME TONIGHT TO RECOUNT ALL OF THE JEWISH AMERICANS' LONGSTANDING MILITARY SERVICE TO THIS NATION AND THEIR MANY HEROIC ACTS ON THE BATTLE FIELD. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE SOME OF THESE AMERICAN JEWS WHO SERVED WITH DISTINCTION IN THIS NATION'S WARS AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS. MOST OF MY RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL FACTS CAME FROM THE RECORDS OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY IN WASHINGTON, D.C. IF YOU ARE EVER IN THE DC AREA, I RECOMMEND HIGHLY THAT YOU VISIT THE MUSEUM AT 1811 R STREET NORTHWEST AND VIEW FOR YOURSELF THE WONDERFUL EXHIBITS THEY HAVE ON DISPLAY. DURING MY RESEARCH, I FOUND SOME OF THE PROPER NAMES DIFFICULT TO PRONOUNCE SO PLEASE OVERLOOK AND FORGIVE ME FOR ANY NAME THAT I MIGHT MISPRONOUNCE.

I WANT TO START WITH THE WAR THAT WAS THE FOUNDATION FOR THE BIRTH OF THIS NATION, THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. WHEN WE FOUGHT THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, THERE WERE ABOUT 2000 JEWISH CITIZENS IN AMERICA. SOUTH CAROLINA HAD A PREDOMINATELY JEWISH MILITIA COMPANY THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE WAR. FRANCIS SALVADOR WAS A DELEGATE TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA PROVINCIAL CONGRESS IN 1775. HE WAS THE FIRST JEWISH AMERICAN TO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE IN THIS COUNTRY AND THE FIRST JEWISH AMERICAN TO DIE IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. HAYM SOLOMON, WHO IMMIGRATED FROM POLAND TO NEW YORK DURING THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, WAS THE BUSINESSMAN AND FINANCIAL BROKER WHO PERSONALLY RAISED MOST OF THE MONEY AMERICA NEEDED TO FIGHT THE WAR AND LATER TO SAVE THE NEW NATION FROM COLLAPSE. IN 1779, ANOTHER PATRIOT, SOLOMON BUSH WAS PROMOTED TO THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL IN THE CONTINENTAL ARMY, MAKING HIM THE HIGHEST RANKING JEWISH OFFICER IN AMERICA AT THE TIME. IN THE BATTLE WITH THE BRITISH AT BRANDYWINE, COLONEL BUSH RECEIVED WOUNDS THAT ALMOST KILLED HIM AND UNFORTUNATELY, HIS BROTHER CAPTAIN LEWIS BUSH, WAS KILLED IN THAT SAME BATTLE. AS A SIDE NOTE, AFTER HIS ARMY CAREER, COLONEL BUSH WAS CONSIDERED FOR THE POSITION OF POSTMASTER GENERAL. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT GET THE APPOINTMENT, HE WAS THE FIRST JEWISH AMERICAN KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED FOR A CABINET POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT.

AFTER AMERICA WON ITS FREEDOM IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, AMERICAN JEWS CONTINUED THEIR DEDICATED SERVICE IN THE MILITARY. IN AMERICA'S NEXT MAJOR CONFLICT AGAINST THE BRITISH, THE WAR OF 1812, AMERICAN JEWISH SERVICEMEN SERVED FAITHFULLY ON LAND AND ON SEA.

URIAH PHILLIPS LEVY WAS ONE OF THE JEWISH AMERICANS WHO SERVED DURING THE WAR OF 1812. HE BECAME THE FIRST JEWISH COMMODORE IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY. AT THAT TIME, COMMODORE WAS THE HIGHEST RANK IN THE NAVY AND WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO THE RANK OF ADMIRAL TODAY. COMMODORE LEVY IS CREDITED WITH ENDING THE PUNITIVE PRACTICE OF FLOGGING IN THE NAVY (I AM SURE SOME UNDISCIPLINED SAILORS THANK HIM). HE IS ALSO KNOWN FOR BUYING AND RESTORING MONTICELLO, THOMAS JEFFERSON'S ESTATE IN VIRGINIA. THE JEWISH CHAPELS AT THE NORFOLK VIRGINIA NAVAL STATION AND THE US NAVAL ACADEMY IN ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND ARE NAMED IN HIS HONOR. THE DESTROYER ESCORT, THE U.S.S. LEVY, ALSO BEARS THIS GREAT LEADER'S NAME.

THE NEXT MAJOR CONFLICT, THE MEXICAN WAR, WAS FOUGHT FROM 1846 TO 1848, BETWEEN THE US AND MEXICO OVER AMERICA'S ANNEXATION OF TEXAS. DURING THAT WAR DR. DAVID DE LEON FROM SOUTH CAROLINA SERVED AS AN ARMY SURGEON. DURING ONE FIERCE BATTLE AGAINST GENERAL SANTA ANNA'S TROOPS, ALL OF THE AMERICAN OFFICERS WERE

EITHER KILLED OR WOUNDED. DOCTOR DE LEON, WITHOUT ANY COMBAT TRAINING, KEPT THE AMERICAN TROOPS FROM RETREATING IN CHAOS, BY TAKING COMMAND AND LEADING A SUCCESSFUL COUNTERATTACK. HE WAS GIVEN THE NICKNAME, "THE FIGHTING DOCTOR" AS A RESULT OF HIS AMAZING EXPLOITS IN THAT BATTLE. CONGRESS PRESENTED HIM WITH A SPECIAL CITATION FOR HIS HEROIC ACTIONS. ANOTHER JEWISH MILITARY HERO DURING THE MEXICAN WAR WAS COLONEL LEON DYER (HIS FAMILY HAD CHANGED THEIR NAME FROM HEIM), AN ORTHODOX JEWISH AMERICAN FROM NEW ORLEANS. AFTER GENERAL SANTA ANNA'S TROOPS HAD SLAUGHTERED DAVID CROCKETT, JIM BOWIE, AND THE REST OF THE DEFENDERS OF THE ALAMO, DYER JOINED VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO HELP THE TEXANS. DYER AND HIS NEW ORLEANS VOLUNTEERS FOUGHT WITH THE AMERICAN MILITARY FORCE THAT DEFEATED THE MEXICAN ARMY, BRINGING AN END TO THE WAR. AS A MATTER OF FACT, DYER WAS PART OF THE HONOR GUARD THAT ESCORTED GENERAL SANTA ANNA TO WASHINGTON D.C. AFTER HE WAS CAPTURED. GENERAL SANTA ANNA LATER SENT COLONEL DYER A LETTER OF APPRECIATION. I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION ONE OTHER JEWISH MILITARY LEADER WHO FOUGHT IN THE MEXICAN WAR, GENERAL DAVID EMANUEL TWIGGS. AS A COLONEL HE LED HIS BRIGADE IN TWO MAJOR BATTLES DURING THE WAR. HE WAS PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER GENERAL AND LED HIS DIVISION SUCCESSFULLY IN NUMEROUS BATTLES.

IN AMERICA'S NEXT MAJOR CONFLICT, THE CIVIL WAR, YOU HAD BROTHER PITTED AGAINST BROTHER, AND LIKE ALL OTHER AMERICANS, AMERICAN JEWS FOUGHT ON BOTH SIDES. A LITTLE OVER 2000 JEWISH AMERICANS FOUGHT FOR THE SOUTH AND OVER 9000 FOUGHT FOR THE NORTH. CAPTAIN LEVI MYERS HARBY, FOR EXAMPLE, DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF, AS THE 68 YEAR OLD COMMANDER OF A FIGHTING SHIP THAT PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE SOUTH WINNING THE BATTLE OF GALVESTON. AS A RESULT, CAPTAIN HARBY WAS DECORATED FOR HIS LEADERSHIP AND BRAVERY. DOCTOR DAVID DELEON, THE FIGHTING DOCTOR, ALSO FOUGHT FOR THE CONFEDERACY, AND BECAME THE CONFEDERACY'S FIRST SURGEON GENERAL. ANOTHER JEWISH AMERICAN OF NOTE ON THE CONFEDERACY SIDE WAS LOUISIANA SENATOR JUDAH PHILIP BENJAMIN WHO IN 1861 WAS APPOINTED ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE CONFEDERACY AND A YEAR LATER WAS APPOINTED CONFEDERATE SECRETARY OF STATE. BENJAMIN'S FACE WAS USED ON THE CONFEDERATE TWO DOLLAR BILL: THE ONLY PERSON OF JEWISH HERITAGE EVER TO RECEIVE SUCH AN HONOR UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL. MANY JEWISH AMERICANS ALSO SERVED ON THE UNION SIDE, SEVERAL RISING TO THE RANK OF GENERAL. FREDERICK KNEFLER OF INDIANA WAS ONE OF THESE OUTSTANDING LEADERS. HE MUSTERED IN AS A FIRST LIEUTENANT IN 1861 AND BY THE TIME HE MUSTERED OUT FOUR YEARS LATER, HE HAD BEEN BREVETTED TO BRIGADIER GENERAL. PHILIP J. JOACHIMSON WAS THE NEW YORK DISTRICT ATTORNEY WHO SECURED THE FIRST ANTISLAVERY

CONVICTION IN AMERICA. DURING THE CIVIL WAR JOACHIMSON HELPED ORGANIZE THE 59TH NEW YORK VOLUNTEER REGIMENT. HE SERVED IN THE REGIMENT AS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL AND WAS LATER PROMOTED TO BRIGADIER GENERAL. EDWARD S. SALOMON ALSO SERVED AS A UNION BRIGADIER GENERAL DURING THE WAR AND LATER BECAME THE GOVERNOR OF THE WASHINGTON TERRITORY. THE FIRST JEWISH CHAPLAIN, RABBI JACOB FRANKEL, OF PHILADELPHIA WAS APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT DURING THE CIVIL WAR AFTER A JEWISH GROUP PERSUADED CONGRESS TO CHANGE THE LAW THAT REQUIRED ALL MILITARY CHAPLAINS BE CHRISTIAN. THIS IS CONSIDERED BY SOME HISTORIANS AS THE FIRST FEDERAL VICTORY FOR AMERICAN JEWS. MAJOR ALFRED MORDECAI WAS AN IMPORTANT JEWISH ARMY OFFICER WHO DECIDED TO RESIGN HIS COMMISSION RATHER THAN TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST FAMILY MEMBERS WHO WERE ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS BLOODY CIVIL WAR. MORDECAI HAD FINISHED FIRST IN HIS WEST POINT CLASS EVEN THOUGH HE WAS THE ONLY JEWISH CADET AT THE SCHOOL AND THE SUBJECT OF HARSH HARASSMENT. WHEN THE WAR STARTED, HE WAS THE ARMY'S LEADING ORDNANCE EXPERT AND HAD WRITTEN THE ARMY'S FIRST ORDNANCE MANUAL.

CONGRESS ESTABLISHED THE MEDAL OF HONOR DURING THE CIVIL WAR. IT IS THE MILITARY'S HIGHEST HONOR FOR VALOR. DURING THE CIVIL WAR, FOUR JEWISH AMERICANS RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR. PRIVATE BENJAMIN LEVY WAS A DRUMMER BOY WHO TOOK THE WEAPON OF A SICK COMRADE, AND WENT INTO THE BATTLE. WHEN THE COLOR BEARERS WERE

SHOT DOWN, HE RETRIEVED THE COLORS UNDER HEAVY FIRE, AND SAVED THEM FROM CAPTURE. SGT LEOPOLD KARPELES WAS A COLOR BEARER WHO UNDER DEADLY HEAVY FIRE FROM THE ENEMY PERSUADED RETREATING UNION TROOPS TO TURN AND FIGHT, THEREBY STOPPING THE ENEMY'S ADVANCE. PRIVATE DAVID URBANSKY RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS GALLANT ACTIONS DURING THE BATTLES OF SHILOH AND VICKSBURG. SERGEANT MAJOR ABRAHAM COHN, UNDER EXTREMELY HEAVY FIRE, RALLIED FLEEING AND DISORGANIZED TROOPS FROM DIFFERENT REGIMENTS DURING THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS AND UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP THE INSPIRED SOLDIERS STOPPED THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ENEMY.

DURING AMERICA'S INDIAN WARS, MANY JEWISH AMERICANS CONTINUED TO PROUDLY SERVE. SERGEANT SIMON SUHLER, WHO ASSUMED THE NAME OF CHARLES GARDNER, FOUGHT THE APACHES WITH THE 8TH CAVALRY IN ARIZONA AND, AS A PRIVATE, RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS COURAGEOUS ACTS IN BATTLE AS A SCOUT.

IN AMERICA'S NEXT MAJOR CONFLICT, THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR, JEWISH AMERICANS AGAIN ANSWERED THE CALL IN LARGE NUMBERS. WHEN THE U.S.S. MAINE WAS SUNK IN 1898, FIFTEEN JEWISH SAILORS WERE KILLED. ADOLPH MARIX, THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WAS JEWISH AMERICAN AND HE LATER BECAME A VICE ADMIRAL IN THE NAVY. IT

SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE FIRST ROUGH RIDER TO DIE IN COMBAT IN THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR WAS JACOB WILBUSKY, A 16 YEAR-OLD JEWISH BOY AND THE FIRST MAN TO BE KILLED IN THE ATTACK ON MANILA WAS A JEWISH AMERICAN, SGT MAURICE JOOST OF THE FIRST CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS.

IN 1915, THE US OCCUPIED HAITI TO STABILIZE THE COUNTRY AFTER HAITI'S PRESIDENT'S MURDER WAS FOLLOWED BY ANARCHY. A JEWISH MARINE, SAMUEL GROSS WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS HEROIC ACTIONS AGAINST HAITIAN BANDITS DURING THE OCCUPATION.

THE NATIONS NEXT BIG CONFLICT WAS WORLD WAR I. APPROXIMATELY 200,000 JEWISH AMERICANS SERVED IN THE MILITARY DURING THAT WAR, MANY WITH DISTINCTION. MANY OF THESE UNIFORMED JEWISH AMERICANS SERVED IN LEADERSHIP ROLES, INCLUDING OUTSTANDING FLAG OFFICERS LIKE MAJOR GENERAL MILTON J. FOREMAN AND BRIGADIER GENERAL ABEL DAVIS.

LIKE THEY HAD DONE IN EVERY PREVIOUS MAJOR AMERICAN MILITARY CONFLICT, JEWISH AMERICANS SHOWED THEIR METAL IN WORLD WAR I. ABOUT 200 JEWISH AMERICANS RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS, 15 RECEIVED THE NAVY CROSS, AND THREE JEWISH AMERICANS WERE AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR THEIR SERVICE AND VALOR DURING WORLD WAR I. ALL THREE MEDAL OF HONOR WINNERS, FIRST SERGEANT SYDNEY GUMPERTZ, FIRST SERGEANT BENJAMIN KAUFMAN, AND

SERGEANT WILLIAM SAWELSON, EARNED THEIR AWARD FOR ACTS OF BRAVERY IN SEPARATE BATTLES IN FRANCE IN 1918.

AFTER THE DESPICABLE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR BROUGHT AMERICA INTO WORLD WAR II, THOUSANDS OF JEWISH AMERICANS ANSWERED THE CALL TO DUTY LIKE SO MANY OTHER AMERICANS, AND LIKE JEWISH AMERICANS IN EVERY PREVIOUS CONFLICT, THEY PROVED THEIR WORTH BY PERFORMING MAGNIFICENTLY THROUGHOUT THE WAR. FROM SOLDIERS LIKE RABBI ALEXANDER D. GOODE, THE ARMY LIEUTENANT, WHO WAS ONE OF FOUR CHAPLAINS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES TO SAVE OTHER SOLDIERS DURING THE SINKING OF THE U.S.S. DORCHESTER. RABBI GOODE AND THE OTHER THREE CHAPLAINS, MOVED AROUND THE SINKING SHIP THAT HAD BEEN HIT BY A TORPEDO FROM A NAZI SUBMARINE, CALMING FRIGHTENED MEN, DIRECTING DAZED SOLDIERS TO LIFEBOATS, AND HANDING OUT LIFE JACKETS. WHEN THEY HAD GIVEN OUT THE LAST OF THE LIFE JACKETS, RABBI GOODE AND THE OTHER CHAPLAINS, REMOVED THEIR OWN LIFE JACKETS AND FORCED THEM ON FOUR YOUNG TERRIFIED SOLDIERS. RABBI GOODE AND THE OTHER THREE CHAPLAINS COULD BE SEEN CLINGING TO EACH OTHER, THEIR HEADS BOWED IN PRAYER AS THE SHIP SLIPPED UNDER THE ICY WATER OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC, DROWNING WITH MORE THAN 600 OTHER SERVICEMEN.

TO SOLDIERS LIKE MAJOR GENERAL MAURICE ROSE, WHO IS CONSIDERED BY MANY HISTORIANS AS WORLD WAR II 'S "GREATEST FORGOTTEN COMMANDER". SOME SAY THAT HE WAS AS GOOD AS, OR EVEN BETTER THAN GENERAL PATTON. GENERAL ROSE COMMANDED HIS THIRD ARMORED DIVISION FROM THE FRONT, CLOSE TO THE FIGHT. IN MARCH OF 1945, DURING OPERATIONS IN A RURAL FOREST AREA IN GERMANY, GENERAL ROSE CAME AROUND A CORNER ONLY TO FIND HIS JEEP SURROUNDED BY SEVERAL GERMAN TANKS. AS HE WITHDREW HIS PISTOL, A YOUNG GERMAN TANK COMMANDER SHOT HIM, TWO STAR GENERAL ROSE WAS THE HIGHEST RANKING AMERICAN KILLED BY ENEMY FIRE IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS IN THE WAR (THREE STAR GENERAL LESLEY J. MCNAIR WHO WAS KILLED A YEAR EARLIER IN NORMANDY, DIED BY FRIENDLY FIRE). AS A RESULT OF THEIR DEDICATED SERVICE AND IN SOME INSTANCES THEIR DEMONSTRATED VALOR BEYOND BELIEF, 115 JEWISH SERVICEMEN RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS, 12 RECEIVED THE NAVY CROSS, AND THREE, CAPTAIN BEN SALOMON, SECOND LIEUTENANT RAYMOND ZUSSMAN, AND STAFF SERGEANT ISADORE JACHMAN, RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR, IN WORLD WAR II.

JEWISH WOMEN SHOWED THEIR PATRIOTISM AND LOVE OF THEIR COUNTRY BY ALSO ENTERING THE MILITARY DURING WORLD WAR II BY THE THOUSANDS, SERVING IN EVERY BRANCH OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH DISTINCTION LIKE THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS. WOMEN LIKE ARMY NURSE, LIEUTENANT FRANCES SLANGER. LIEUTENANT SLANGER WAS ONE OF FOUR

NURSES WHO WADED ASHORE AT THE NORMANDY BEACHHEAD ON D-DAY. STARS AND STRIPES PRINTED A LETTER THAT LIEUTENANT SLANGER HAD WRITTEN ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS, BUT UNFORTUNATELY SHE DIED IN A GERMAN SHELL ATTACK BEFORE SHE COULD SEE IT.

IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE JEWISH AMERICANS WERE AGAIN SHOWING THEIR PROPENSITY TO SERVE, THIS TIME IN THE KOREAN WAR AND AGAIN MANY OF THEM WERE CITED FOR THEIR HEROISM; LIKE MAJOR MELVIN GARTEN WHO DURING A FIERCE BATTLE IN THE WAR CHARGED UP A HILL ALONE TO GET TO SOME OF HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS WHO WERE PINNED DOWN BY HEAVY ENEMY FIRE. GARTEN, AGAINST ALL ODDS MADE IT TO THE TOP OF THE HILL, RALLIED THE MEN THERE, AND LEAD THEM IN A COUNTER ATTACK THAT DEFEATED THE ENEMY. HE WAS NOMINATED FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR, BUT INSTEAD RECEIVED THE SECOND HIGHEST AWARD FOR VALOR, THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS. TWO OTHER JEWISH AMERICANS, HOWARD CARDOZA AND LEONARD KRAVITZ, RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS FOR VALOR IN KOREA AND COUNTLESS OTHER JEWISH AMERICANS RECEIVED SILVER STARS, BRONZE STARS AND OTHER ESTEEMED MEDALS. THERE IS A SAD FOOTNOTE TO THE HISTORICAL PAGE OF JEWISH AMERICANS EARNING MEDALS IN THE KOREAN WAR. THAT'S THE STORY OF CORPORAL TIBOR RUBIN, A JEWISH AMERICAN INFANTRYMAN, WHO ACCORDING TO FELLOW SOLDIERS' AFFIDAVITS WAS DENIED A MEDAL OF HONOR THAT HE CLEARLY DESERVED BY A BIGOTED SUPERIOR. THE

JEWISH WAR VETERANS ACT OF 2001 ESTABLISHED A REVIEW OF MEDAL OF HONOR NOMINATIONS FOR JEWISH AMERICAN SERVICEMEN WHOSE NOMINATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN DERAILED BECAUSE OF ANTISEMITISM. AFTER AN INVESTIGATION UNDER THE ACT, CORPORAL RUBIN WAS AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR BY PRESIDENT BUSH IN 2005, 55 YEARS AFTER HIS HEROIC ACTS. I READ HIS MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION AND WITHOUT A DOUBT IF HIS PREJUDICED SERGEANT HAD SUBMITTED RUBIN'S NOMINATION, AS HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO DO ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS BY TWO COMMANDERS, WHO UNFORTUNATELY WERE KILLED IN ACTION SHORTLY AFTER , BELIEVE ME, CORPORAL RUBIN WOULD HAVE RECEIVED HIS KOREAN WAR MEDAL OF HONOR DECADES AGO.

THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF JEWISH AMERICANS SERVED IN THE LONG DRAWN-OUT VIETNAM WAR, WITH HONOR, EARNING MANY MEDALS AS A RESULT OF THEIR HEROISM. TWO JEWISH AMERICANS EARNED THE MEDAL OF HONOR IN VIETNAM.

COLONEL JACK JACOBS EARNED HIS MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE RICE PADDIES OF NAM AS A CAPTAIN IN 1968, WHEN WHILE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED, CROSSED AN OPEN RICE PADDY NUMEROUS TIMES TO EVACUATE WOUNDED SOLDIERS TO SAFETY, SINGLE HANDEDLY ENGAGING AND DRIVING OFF ATTACKING VIET CONG SQUADS ON THREE OCCASIONS. AIRMAN FIRST CLASS JOHN LEE LEVITOW RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS ACTIONS WHEN A MORTAR ROUND STRUCK AND DAMAGED HIS AIRCRAFT. AIRMAN LEVITOW HAD MORE THAN 40 SHRAPNEL WOUNDS IN HIS BACK AND

LEGS, WHEN HE SAW A SMOKING MAGNESIUM FLARE IN A BUNCH OF SPILLED AMMUNITION IN THE CARGO BAY OF THE PLANE. HE THREW HIMSELF ON THE FLARE , HUGGED IT CLOSE TO HIS BODY AND DRAGGED HIMSELF TO AN OPEN DOOR. AS HE HURLED THE FLARE THROUGH THE DOOR, IT IGNITED HARMLESSLY OUTSIDE THE AIRCRAFT. HIS UNSELFISH ACT OF COURAGE SAVED THE PLANE AND ITS ENTIRE CREW.

IN OUR MOST RECENT PAST, JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE CONTINUED TO SERVE BRAVELY IN OUR MILITARY CONFLICTS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN. BUT I DO NOT HAVE TO GO OUTSIDE YOUR SYNAGOGUE TO GIVE EXAMPLES OF DECORATED JEWISH AMERICANS WHO HAVE SERVED IN RECENT ARMED CONFLICTS. YOUR OWN STAFF SERGEANT ADAM WENC, ONE OF THE NATION'S TOP MARINE CORPS RECRUITERS IN 2008 HAS SERVED TWO TOURS IN IRAQ RECEIVING A PURPLE HEART FOR INJURIES RECEIVED IN THAT WAR. YOUR MAJOR DAVID ALLEN COMMANDED A MILITARY POLICE UNIT IN IRAQ AND EARNED SEVERAL MEDALS INCLUDING THE BRONZE STAR.

SO LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FOR ANYONE TO EVEN INFER OR WHISPER THAT JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE NOT CARRIED THEIR FAIR SHARE IN SERVICE TO THIS COUNTRY IN UNIFORM, IS OUTRAGEOUS, AND CONTRARY TO THE PAGES OF HISTORY. FOR 350 YEARS JEWISH AMERICANS HAVE FOUGHT BRAVELY WITH HONOR AND DISTINCTION FOR THIS COUNTRY AND THEY CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE TRADITION STARTED BY THE FIRST JEWISH IMMIGRANTS IN NEW AMSTERDAM WHO DECLARED LOUDLY AND PROUDLY, "WE ARE AMERICANS. WE TOO WILL DEFEND OUR HOMELAND"

IN CONCLUSION, IN THE MILITARY THERE IS A CUSTOM, BACKED BY REGULATION THAT REQUIRES ALL ENLISTED PERSONS, AND ANY OFFICER WHO HAS LESS RANK THAN I HAVE, TO SALUTE ME IF THEY MEET ME OUT DOORS WHILE WE ARE BOTH IN UNIFORM, AND I MUST RETURN THE SALUTE. YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS A MAJOR I STARTED A PERSONAL TRADITION THAT WHEN ONE OF MY SOLDIERS HAD DONE SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT OR ACHIEVED SOMETHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, I WOULD RECOGNIZE THEIR ACHIEVEMENT BY CALLING THEM UP IN FRONT OF THE UNIT FORMATION, CALLING THEM TO ATTENTION AND RENDER A SALUTE TO THEM. I ASKED THEM NOT TO RETURN THE SALUTE, BECAUSE THE SALUTE WAS JUST MY WAY OF SAYING HOW PROUD I WAS OF THEM.

ARE HIGHLY DECORATED WORLD WAR II VETERANS LEONARD SWARTZ AND LEONARD KAY, IN ATTENDANCE TONIGHT? WILL YOU PLEASE STAND? ARE THERE ANY OTHER VETERANS FROM WORLD WAR II IN ATTENDANCE? WILL YOU ALSO STAND?

ARE THERE ANY KOREAN WAR VETERANS IN THE ROOM? ARE THERE ANY VIETNAM VETERANS IN THE ROOM? DO WE HAVE ANY VETERANS FROM OPERATIONS DESERT STORM? ARE THERE ANY VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED IN EITHER IRAQ OR AFGHANISTAN? ARE THERE ANY OTHER VETERANS IN THE ROOM WHO ARE NOT STANDING? PLEASE STAND.

VETERANS, ATTENTION!! PLEASE DO NOT RETURN MY SALUTE (RENDER HAND SALUTE TO STANDING VETS), I MAJOR GENERAL RETIRED AL GILLEY SALUTE YOU BECAUSE I SO PROUD OF EACH OF YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

**AND COMMITMENT. BUT THIS IS NOT JUST MY SALUTE IT IS A SYMBOLIC
SALUTE FROM A GRATEFUL NATION THAT APPRECIATES THE SACRIFICES
THAT YOU HAVE MADE IN UNIFORM TO MAINTAIN OUR FREEDOMS AND TO
KEEP AMERICA SAFE.**

THANK YOU!!

About the Presenter



Maj. Gen. US Army Reserves (Ret.) Alfonso (“Al”) Gilley is a native of Bradenton, Florida. He is a “mustang” who enlisted in the Army in 1965.

General Gilley spent two years as an enlisted soldier in the Army before being selected for Infantry Officer Candidate School in 1967. Approximately six months after receiving his commission to 2nd Lieutenant, General Gilley was sent to Vietnam as a Platoon Leader assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. After his one-year tour in Vietnam, General Gilley spent four more years in the Active Army before leaving in 1973 as a Captain to continue his education.

While he was stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland, General Gilley applied and was accepted into the University of Maryland, College Park, and Undergraduate Psychology program in 1973, from which he graduated with honors. While at Maryland, General Gilley was one of the founders of the University of Maryland Black Psychology Students Association.

General Gilley enrolled into the University of Maryland Law School in 1975. During his last year at Law School, General Gilley was hired by the United States Army Corps of Engineers as a Law Clerk. After Graduation, General Gilley passed the Pennsylvania and Maryland Bars and was retained by the Corps of Engineers as an Attorney in 1979. He retired from the Corps in 2002 after more than 25 years of service. He also remained in the Active Army Reserve, retiring on February 14, 2004, after 38 years of service, at the rank of Major General.

General Gilley’s military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal (with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters), National Defense Service Medal (with 1 Service Star), Vietnam Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device, and the Knowlton Award.

Currently, General Gilley is a life-time member of the VFW and the founder of Students Taking Responsibility In Developing Excellence, Inc. (STRIDE), a non-profit mentoring organization in Pensacola, Florida.

General Gilley is married to the former Ruthie Hubert, from Atmore, Alabama. They have one son, Michael George.