

# “You're dead only if you're forgotten”<sup>1</sup>



Arlington Memorial Cemetery

By Jerry Klinger

*“On behalf of the American people, lay to rest those who have served our nation with dignity and honor, treating their families with respect and compassion, and connecting guests to the rich tapestry of the cemetery's living history, while maintaining these hallowed grounds befitting the sacrifice of all those who rest here in quiet repose.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Mission Statement of Arlington National Cemetery*

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Poch

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/AboutUs/MissionVision.aspx>



Ken Poch

For more than a decade Ken Poch had been a regular visitor, at times a daily visitor, to Arlington National Cemetery outside of Washington, D.C. Arlington is America's premier military cemetery – “A national shrine - A living history of freedom - Where dignity and honor rest in solemn repose”<sup>3</sup>.

Ken was not just a visitor or a tourist. He had a mission. His mission was on behalf of the American people. His mission was to acknowledge, to document and honor, the sacrifice and patriotism of the American Jew for their country.

"*There's a myth that Jews don't fight and don't serve,*" he said during a recent visit to the cemetery.

"*I want to know who these people were,*" he said, pointing to one of many graves he has catalogued."<sup>4</sup>

Poch had relocated to Reston, Virginia from Brooklyn, accepting a position as an audio-visual technician in the mid 1980's. He read Mel Young's book - *Where They Lie: The Story of the Jewish Soldiers of the North and South Whose Deaths--Killed, Mortally Wounded, or Died of Disease or Other ... War, 1861-1865 - Someone Should Say Kaddish*. Poch went to Arlington Cemetery one Saturday afternoon to place small smooth stones on the gravesites and to say Kaddish for five Jewish Civil War soldiers buried there. They had died fighting for the Union.

While touring the cemetery, he observed an ocean of white headstones with crosses. Yet in the ocean he also saw a sprinkling of gravesites whose tombstones were carved with the Star of David. Before World War I, headstones did not have crosses or any designations of religious orientation. Ken began to wonder? How many Jews are buried in Arlington? He went to the Cemetery's administration office and inquired. No one knew. No one had ever documented,

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/7396/jewish-war-veterans-dead-not-forgotten-at-arlington/>

tabulated or specifically identified the numbers of honored Jewish dead buried in the cemetery. Poch's mission was defined. He knew what he had to do.

Days passed into years. Poch returned again and again, camera and notebooks in hand. He walked over and over the cemetery grounds looking for names that might be Jewish. He spent hundreds of hours crisscrossing the cemetery gathering information that he would meticulously research. Utilizing records from the Office of the Army Historian, writing to surviving family members, searching files, photographs, documents and burial information, he slowly began identifying the Jews who rested in Arlington's hallowed grounds.

At Christmas, Poch would remove Christmas wreaths placed upon Jewish Arlington graves by well intentioned individuals. They did not understand that Jews fought and sacrificed as Americans with their Christian comrades for their mutual freedom to approach God as individuals. By 2002, Poch had identified 2,700 interments of Jewish United States Service personnel and a small number of their spouses and family who were buried at Arlington. His work was not totally scientific because interments are not catalogued by religion at Arlington. He depended upon hard slogging, guess work and finding the evidence to confirm his identifications.

In numerous cases, individuals and family members chose not to respond to his inquiries. Sometimes the deceased chose to keep their Jewishness secret, as did Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Simon Suhler<sup>5</sup> (AKA – Charles Gardner). Sometimes, even family members did not know about the Jewish background or chose to respect their wishes for privacy. In some situations, Jews were buried as Christians even if they had not converted, such as the infamous case of General Maurice Rose. He was an Armored Commander under General Patton during World War II. Rose was killed in action. Rose was the son of a Rabbi. He had never pressed his Jewish identity because he feared that significant anti-Semitism in the U.S. military would hurt his career potential. Rose's wife, a non-Jew, insisted that he be buried under a Cross. He was.

During the American Civil War (1861-1865), it was common for Jews not to designate their religious affiliation. They feared, if wounded during battle, they would be the last ones evacuated to hospitals because they were Jews. Consequently, the full and accurate number of Jews who served and gave the ultimate sacrifice as soldiers for America can never be accurately known. It will always be underestimated. Many will never be recognized as having been Jewish.

Poch did his best and his best was remarkable. He identified Jewish generals, admirals, privates and simple seamen or airmen. He identified many famous American Jews who had served in the military and many who were not famous. He collected their stories and documented their lives. His best was a credit to him and for American Jewry.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon\\_Suhler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_Suhler)



22 June 1999

Dear Mr. Poch, *Ken*

Thank you very much for your continued participation in the many functions within the Military District of Washington. Your photographs capture our great soldiers showcasing the Army to the American people. I appreciate the support of our soldiers and mission.

Thank you again and keep up the great work.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Ivany  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding Officer

Mr. Ken Poch  
Reston, VA 20191-2246

Letter of commendation to Poch by Maj. Gen. Robert Ivany

"Each person had a story of how they lived and died. He always said, 'You're dead only if you're forgotten,'" his sister Sheila Targan explained.

Eventually, Poch's records filled 31 boxes. The boxes were donated to the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Washington in Rockville, Maryland. Poch's plan was to have them published.

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A random walk along the roads and up the hills of Arlington brings alive the meaning of the descriptive phrase, *cemeteries are outdoor museums*. Most Americans do not know history but do recognize a few names here and there, such as General Pershing from World War I, or General Marshal from World War II, Chief Justice Earl Warren and Justice Thurgood Marshall. No matter what level of historical awareness an individual has, the Star of David tells a story by itself. The Star of David draws the eye.



Abram Kunen

Abram Kunen was a 23 year old seaman aboard the *U.S.S. Detroit* when it went into action, May 12, 1898, attacking Spanish land emplacements in the opening salvos of the Spanish American War. He received the Sampson Medal for heroic duty under fire. His gravesite is passed by thousands of Americans daily as they walk with respectful observance along one of Arlington's many gently winding roads. Sampson was proud of his service to America. He was proud of his Jewish identity. He was proud of his Service to America. His tombstone bespoke the meaning of his life, for all to see.



Jewish Chaplain's Memorial

Near the crest of Chaplains Hill, the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, [www.JASHP.org](http://www.JASHP.org), had been directly involved in the Four Chaplains memorial last year. A long overdue, neglected honor to Jewish Chaplain was corrected.

([http://www.jewishmag.com/157mag/immortal\\_chaplains/immortal\\_chaplains.htm](http://www.jewishmag.com/157mag/immortal_chaplains/immortal_chaplains.htm))

On Chaplain's Hill are the gravesites of three high ranking Jewish Chaplains: Captain Joshua Goldberg, Rabbi U.S. Navy, Rear Admiral Bertram Korn, Rabbi U.S. Navy, and Brigadier General Simeon Kobrinetz, Rabbi U.S. Air Force.



Captain Joshua Goldberg

Captain Joshua Goldberg was born in 1896 in Bobrousk, Russia. In 1914, Goldberg was drafted into the Russian Army as a private. With the collapse of czarist Russia, Goldberg made it to the United States. In 1916, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Rabbi Goldberg served in World War I as an infantryman with the American Expeditionary Force. He received five battle ribbons for heroism. After the war, he returned to the U.S. where he became an ordained Rabbi in 1926. Goldberg returned to the service of America in 1941 as a commissioned Naval Chaplain. He was the first Jew to obtain a Navy Chaplain's commission.

Rabbi Bertram Korn, Rear Admiral, Marine, served during World War II in California and China with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions. He was a noted Jewish historian, pulpit Rabbi and the first Rabbi to rise to the rank of Flag Officer in the U.S. Navy.

Rabbi Simeon Kobrinetz was the first Rabbi to reach the rank of General in the U.S. Air Force.

In Arlington the high ranking rest with the low ranking, equal before God.

"Pfc. Robert Cohen, taken prisoner by the Nazis during the Battle of the Bulge, was murdered in the woods along with 85 other Americans.

Two brothers, Prv. Marvin Kaminsky and Pfc. Maynard Kaminsky, were killed three months

apart during World War II.

Maj. Gen. Julius Ochs Adler served in both world wars and later as the general manager of the New York Times.



Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Freedman "Super Jew"

Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Freedman<sup>6</sup>, Army Special Forces, was the first American killed in Somalia in 1993. He was nicknamed "Super Jew."<sup>7</sup>

Major Eddie Willner died March 30, 2008. He was born in Muenchen-Gladbach, Germany, 1926.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>6</sup> <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/lnfreedman.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/7396/jewish-war-veterans-dead-not-forgotten-at-arlington/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/07/AR2008040702731.html>

Poch's records noted: "Auschwitz survivor on stone...At 18, he escaped from the Buchenwald Camp and found his way to US 3rd Armored Div., Company D. He was taken to the U.S. and he immediately joined the Army."

Major Willner married a German girl. He explained that there are good Germans and bad Germans; just like there are good Jews and bad Jews.



Admiral Hyman Rickover

Who should be identified as a Jew was a problem Poch faced. It remains one today. Commonly identified as a Jew, Admiral Hyman G. Rickover<sup>9</sup> served in the U.S. Navy for 63 years. He is recognized as the father of the modern U.S. Nuclear Navy. He did push his Jewish identity. Rickover's first wife was Episcopalian; his second wife was Roman Catholic. He is buried under a polished black stone without a Star of David. Whether it was his choice or his wife's, is not known.



Col. Arthur Goldberg

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyman\\_G.\\_Rickover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyman_G._Rickover)



Colonel Arthur Joseph Goldberg<sup>10</sup>, U.S. Air Force, Secretary of Labor, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Ambassador at Large and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom rest adjacent to Section 21 of Arlington Cemetery.



Rae Landy

Section 21 is the Nurses section. Six Jewish nurses rest in Section 21. One individual in particular, Rachael (Rae) Landy, has a unique relationship to America and the people of Israel.

Rae Landy was born in Lithuania. She came to America with her parents as a child. She was educated as a nurse at the Jewish Women's Hospital (later Mount Sinai Hospital), Cleveland, Ohio. In 1911, Landy became the assistant superintendent of Harlem Hospital in New York City. Two years later, 1913, she was recruited by Henrietta Szold<sup>11</sup>, the founder of Hadassah<sup>12</sup>, to go as one of two nurses to Palestine. It was a highly risky venture for two young women trying to bring modern Western medicine, health and maternity practices to suspicious, impoverished Jews. They succeeded beyond anything they could imagine at the time.

Landy and Rose Kaplan began what would later evolve into the famed Hadassah Medical Center<sup>13</sup> in Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Goldberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Goldberg)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Szold.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hadassah.org/site/pp.aspx?c=keJNIWOvEIH&b=5571065>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hadassah.org.il/english>

Landy returned to the United States at the outbreak of WWI and joined the United States Army Nursing Corp. She served in Germany, Belgium and France. Later she served at the White House under President Coolidge. The U.S. Army stationed her to the Philippines in the 1930's.

She was promoted to Captain in 1940. Landy became assistant superintendent at the headquarters of the Second Corp Area at Governors Island, N.Y. During WWII she was Chief of Nurses at Crile General Hospital in Cleveland.

Landy retired a Lt. Col. in the United States Nursing Corps, the second highest obtainable rank for a woman.

Until her death in 1952, Landy worked recruiting nurses for Cleveland's Mt. Sinai Hospital. She was buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. A modest, standard headstone obscures the story of an incredible woman.

Landy's life and career was a role model as a Jew and as a woman. Her early life as a pioneering health professional in Palestine and later as a career United States Military Officer serving in the U.S. Army Nurse Corp, demonstrated how American women, when given the opportunity and responsibility, could and did successfully pursue idealism, careers, leadership and patriotism.

Nearby are two highly unusual memorials. Neither of them are for Jews but are very much about American Jews. A few hundred yards away from the nurses section is the single largest cast bronze memorial in Arlington. The memorial was created to honor the memory of one time enemies of the American Union. The memorial is the Confederate memorial.



Sir Moses Ezekiel's Confederate memorial

Around the base of the memorial, dedicated in 1914 at the height of the Leo Frank hysteria and anti-Semitic frenzy that would result in Frank's lynching nine month later, rest the remains of former Confederate soldiers. The soldiers lie in multiple rows of concentric circles facing

inward toward the memorial. The burials were soldiers who had died in Union hospitals and prisons near Washington during the war. Union feelings were understandably bitter for many years. The families of the Confederates were forbidden to decorate the gravesites with flowers or in some cases even visit the graves. With the passage of time, feelings eased. Today, they rest in Arlington, not as enemies of the Union but once again as Americans.

The Confederate memorial was commissioned to, designed and cast by, the most acclaimed sculptor of the day, Sir Moses Ezekiel.<sup>14</sup> It was approved by President Taft. Ezekiel was a Jewish American ex-patriot. He had fought as a young Confederate cadet at the Battle of New Market, Virginia. Ezekiel had been the first Jew admitted to the Virginia Military Institute. His family was not slave owners, nor was he or his family supportive of slavery. His father was a strong Union man.

Ezekiel wrote later in life about his views of slavery.

*“The question of slavery had long been assigned to its proper position. Virginia has prohibited the bringing slave as far back as the times of Thomas Jefferson, and in reality, no one in the South would have raised an arm to fight for slavery. It was an evil that we inherited, and that we wanted to get rid of, in a way that would be just to the Negroes and just to ourselves.”<sup>15</sup>*

He was, as were many of the South, loyal to their States and fiercely defensive of what they saw as the War of Northern Aggression. When the South lost the War, Ezekiel left for Europe to study art. He spent most of his professional life in Berlin and Rome. Ezekiel was knighted by the German Kaiser and the Italian King. He was honored by Europe’s elite for his artistic talent. As the years passed, he too knew it was time to reunite as Americans.



<sup>14</sup> The first major commission that Ezekiel obtained was initiated by an American Jewish organization, B’Nai Brith in 1873. The major work that significantly vaulted Ezekiel to fame was sculpted in Rome for the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia depicted Religious Liberty. Ezekiel later wrote about the sculpture, “the monument was the tragedy of my life- it is true and I do not refer to it without pain – because it cost me too much moral and physical suffering ever to be forgotten by a human being.” (*Moses Ezekiel, Civil War Soldier, Renowned Sculptor* by Stan Cohen and Keith Gibson, Pictorial Publishing Co, 2007, Missoula, Mt.)

<sup>15</sup> *Moses Ezekiel, Civil War Soldier, Renowned Sculptor* by Stan Cohen and Keith Gibson, Pictorial Publishing Co, 2007, Missoula, Mt. pg. 7

## Gravesite of Moses Ezekiel

Ezekiel died in Rome during the height of World War I. He had expressed his desire to be buried with the Confederate war dead he had memorialized in Arlington. In 1921, Ezekiel's mortal remains were returned to Arlington for reburial.

*"On March 31, it (his body) was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, the first burial ceremony in the new large amphitheater build in 1920. During the funeral the Marine Band played Liszt's "Love's Dream" and a message was read from President Warren G. Harding, praising Ezekiel as "a great Virginian, a great artist, a great American, and a great citizen of world fame."<sup>16</sup>*

Ezekiel was buried on the Eastward facing side of the memorial facing Jerusalem.

The Confederate memorial is the highest memorial, 32.5', in Arlington. From the Confederate memorial, a ship's mast is visible. It is the mast from the *U.S.S. Maine*. The Maine blew up in Havana, Cuba's harbor creating the pretense for the Spanish American War. Two hundred and twenty nine sailors died on the *Maine*.



*U.S.S. Maine* memorial

The second in command of the *Maine* was a Jewish officer. Nineteen of the men aboard her were Jews.

Below the *Maine* memorial are three new memorials. They are simple in design, three vertical rectangular stones mounted on granite bases with brass plaques affixed to the front and back.

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<sup>16</sup> *Moses Ezekiel, Civil War Soldier, Renowned Sculptor* by Stan Cohen and Keith Gibson, Pictorial Publishing Co, 2007, Missoula, Mt. pg. 26

The first memorial with its brass interpretive marker is the for the 1986 *Challenger*<sup>17</sup> space shuttle disaster. An American Jew, Dr. Judith Resnick, was one of the astronauts.



*Challenger* space shuttle memorial

The second memorial is for the service personnel who died in the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission ordered by President Carter. (Sergeant Lawrence Freedman had been a member of that rescue team.)

The third memorial is for the 2003 *Columbia*<sup>18</sup> space shuttle disaster. There were no remains to bring back for burial.

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<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Shuttle\\_Challenger\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Shuttle_Challenger_disaster)

<sup>18</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Shuttle\\_Columbia\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Shuttle_Columbia_disaster)



*Columbia* Space Shuttle memorial

What is so very unique about the memorial for the *Columbia* is the visible inclusion of a Star of David, not as a religious symbol, but as a national symbol. Col. Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, was a crew member. On his left shoulder, as a symbol of national identity, is the flag of Israel with the Star of David.



Col. Ilan Ramon

There are many stories that have never been told. Each one is special, each one unique and each one of a human being who was proud to be an American and a Jew. Ken Poch knew each one. He never had the chance to tell them.



Ken Poch lost his battle with Lou Gehrig's disease<sup>19</sup>, December 27, 2003. His remains were cremated and interred in Arlington National Cemetery, SECTION 5-JJ ROW 2 SITE 4.

Nine years after his death, his stories have not been told, only added to.

Epitaph carved on the base of Sgt. Major Lawrence N. Freedman's grave stone:

*"The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living"*

Jerry Klinger is President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation

[www.JASHP.org](http://www.JASHP.org)

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.lougehrig.com/about/als.htm>

