

## Jewish Aspects of Arlington National Cemetery *Les Bergen*

**Description:** Over 5,500 Jews are buried at the beautiful cemetery overlooking Washington. This talk will tell the accomplishments of several of them - warriors, but also Supreme Court Justices, U.S. senators, ambassadors, astronauts, the sculptor of the Confederate Memorial. All either served in the military from the Civil War to the Iraq War, or are spouses of veterans. This will be a slide presentation of a selection of veterans. It will also tell the Jewish history associated with the Confederate Memorial, USS Maine, and the Columbia and Challenger space shuttle monuments. Some examples are a dozen Union soldiers among the first interred at Arlington. Most were likely recent German immigrants about whom little is known and a Sephardi Confederate veteran who became famous after the war. Other examples to be discussed are Albert Sabin, who learned his skills in the WWII Army, Justice Arthur Goldberg, Senators Lautenberg (WWII), Warren Rudman (Korea combat leader), and two Millennials killed a month apart in Iraq – one a Soviet Jew; the other a grandson of a 1930s refugee from Germany.

**Lt. Col. Les Bergen** (USAR, ret) has been leading annual tours of Jewish sites at Arlington National Cemetery for eight years under sponsorship of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington (JHSGW). He managed the design of parts of the Washington Metrorail system, and was later a civilian employee of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and HQ, Dept. of the Army. Since retirement, he has served as treasurer for JHSGW and the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Mr. Bergen holds a B.S. from The Citadel and an M.B.A. from The George Washington University.

**Arlington Cemetery Grave Locator** for smart phone or Android app or web.

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore-the-Cemetery/Find-a-Grave>

After finding on cemetery map, click on grave icon to see grave marker photo and basic data.

**Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Washington (JGSGW)** database.

The JGSGW database consists of 5,525 names of the Jews buried at the cemetery (to Oct 2013). The database includes grave marker photos and additional information.

<http://anc.jgsgw.org/>

Click on “search.” Best to search family surname only.

The JGSGW data and grave marker photographs are posted on the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR).

<http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/>

## **Jewish issues for burial at Arlington National Cemetery**

**Contact one's rabbi and the cemetery for guidance and details. It is best to discuss these issues in advance of the need.**

- **Requirement for immediate burial and unacceptability of embalming.** Except for Service Members killed in action, burials normally occur a few months after date of death. That is because of practical constraints on capacity of military units, cemetery staff, and chapel and other facilities.

The cemetery staff will make practical accommodation to perform Jewish burials within a few work days after death, but the family should be prepared to forego military honors, and hold gravesite services or conduct funeral services outside the Ft. Meyer chapels. Some funeral homes can provide temporary refrigeration of bodies pending burial. Coordinate these matters among the Cemetery staff, one's rabbi, and the funeral home.

- **Objections to burial in a non-Jewish cemetery.** This might be an issue for some rabbis and congregations. Plans for U.S. military cemetery burial should be discussed with one's rabbi before the need arises.

- **Objections to cremation and inurnment.** This will be an issue for many rabbis and congregations. Such plans should be coordinated with one's rabbi before the need arises.

- **Full traditional Jewish ritual is not possible.** Due to time restrictions with 30 burials per day, coffins are not lowered fully during the funeral. Shovels are not available, and it is not possible to cover the coffin with a layer of soil. The family may throw a packet of soil on the coffin. Gravesite service is restricted to 30 minutes.

- Most of these issues can be avoided by burial at a Veterans Administration cemetery.

## Eligibility for Burial at Arlington Cemetery

Excerpts. See: <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/eligib.htm>

**General requirement:** Must have Honorable Discharge or Active Duty death under honorable conditions.

### For internment (ground burial)

- Death while on Active Duty
- Retired Active Duty veterans
- Retired Reservist or Guardsman age 60 or older
- Veteran honorably separated before 10/01/1949 for medical reasons with 30% or greater disability on date of discharge.
- Veteran who has been awarded one of following: Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross (Air Force Cross, Navy Cross); Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star; Purple Heart
- Veteran is federal elected official or Supreme Court Justice, and certain senior government officials.
- Former POW who died after 11/30/1993.
- Spouse, widow, widower, minor child, permanently dependent child, of any of the above.
- Widow or widower of MIA or lost at sea
- Veteran in same grave with a previously buried primary eligible close relative.

### For internment (ground burial) of cremated remains in unmarked area

- Any veteran. Ashes must be in biodegradable container or placed without container into the ground.

### For inurnment of cremated remains in the columbarium

- Any veteran.
- See lengthy list in web site or contact the Cemetery staff. Includes many veterans and Reservists not eligible for ground burial, and certain commissioned officers of NOAA and US Public Health Service.

Arlington Cemetery is a U.S. Army installation. The National Cemetery Administration, a part of the **Veterans Administration (VA)** operates dozens of military cemeteries around the nation. All veterans with an Honorable or General Discharge are eligible for burial in VA cemeteries. For those who entered military service since 1980, there is a minimum requirement of 24 months of active duty service. Details at

<http://www.cem.va.gov/bbene/eligible.asp>

Or call VA at **1-800-827-1000**

## Selected References

**Books about Arlington National Cemetery.** There are many books for sale about the cemetery, including many beautiful photo books and those on special topics.

Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, *Pocket Guide to Jewish Sites in Arlington National Cemetery* (Washington, 2014) is based on JHSGW cemetery tours.

James Edward Peters, *Arlington National Cemetery: Shrine to America's Heroes*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Bethesda, MD, 2008). This was the initial source for finding most of the Jewish sites at the cemetery.

Robert M. Poole, *On Hallowed Ground: The Story of Arlington National Cemetery* (New York, 2009). The standard history of the cemetery.

### Sources for identification of Pre-WWI Jewish graves

There are no religious symbols on graves before 1918. For pre-WWI graves, one must rely on published lists of Jewish veterans to cross-check against cemetery names.

**Simon Wolf, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier, and Citizen*** (Philadelphia, 1895).

Lists Jews who served in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican War, Civil War Union and Confederate military. Based on responses from B'nai B'rith chapters and synagogues, so not an academic document.

The “**Shapell Roster Project**” has been using modern databases and archival research initially intended to correct the Civil War portion of Simon Wolf's book. It found so many errors that it will be published as a separate document in 2015. There are about 1,500 more names than the original book, despite deletion of hundreds of duplicates and non-Jews.

<http://www.shapell.org/publications/films/>

<https://primarysourcehistory.wordpress.com/tag/shapell-roster-project/>

**Cyrus Adler, “Preliminary List of Jewish Soldiers and Sailors Who Served in the Spanish-American War”** in *The American Jewish Year Book 5661* (Philadelphia, 1900), pp. 525-622.

The article is available on-line at JSTOR

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23600173.pdf?acceptTC=true>

### **Col Mel Rosen**

<http://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com/obituary/Melvin-H.-Rosen/Falls-Church-VA/452690>

<http://www.us-japandialogueonpows.org/>

Click on "POW stories," then "Melvin H. Rosen."

### **Adm. Hyman Rickover**

Norman Polmar and Thomas B. Allen, *Rickover: Controversy and Genius* (New York, 1982)

Michael Pack, *Rickover: The Birth of Nuclear Power*, 2014.

A PBS documentary film

### **Adm. Jeremy Boorda**

Nick Kotz, "Breaking Point," in *Washingtonian* magazine, Dec 1996, p. 94

Malcolm Steinberg, *Admiral Boorda's Navy* (self-published, 2013)

### **Dr. Albert Sabin**

David M. Oshinsky, *Polio: An American Story* (New York, 2005)

*The Polio Crusade*, 2009.

A PBS documentary film

### **Justice Arthur Goldberg**

Jennifer M. Lowe (ed.), *The Jewish Justices of the Supreme Court Revisited: Brandeis to Fortas*, in *Journal of Supreme Court History* (Washington, 1994)

David L. Stebenne, *Arthur J. Goldberg: New Deal Liberal* (New York, 1996)

### **Moses Ezekiel**

Stan Cohen and Keith Gibson, *Moses Ezekiel: Civil War Soldier, Renowned Sculptor* (Charleston, WV, 2007)

Peter Adam Nash, *The Life and Times of Moses Jacob Ezekiel: American Sculptor, Arcadian Knight* (Lanham, MD, 2014)

## **Rae Landy**

Marlin Levin, *It Takes a Dream: The Story of Hadassah*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Jerusalem, 2002)

Archival papers located at Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH

## **Rabbi Alexander Goode**

Dan Kurzman, *No Greater Glory: The Four Immortal Chaplains and the Sinking of the Dorchester in World War II* (New York, 2004)

## **William Friedman**

Ronald Clark, *The Man Who Broke Purple: The Life of Colonel William F. Friedman, Who Deciphered the Japanese Code in World War II* (New York, 1977)

## **Eddie Willner**

Obit

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

## **Charlene Schiff**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Echoes of Memory: Stories from the Memory Project* (Washington, 2003 – 2008)

Five volumes published annually 2003 to 2008. Ms. Schiff had two or three stories of survival published in each volume. Total of 13 articles.

## **Judith Resnik**

Joanne Bernstein and Rose Blue, *Judith Resnik: Challenger Astronaut* (New York, 1990)

Children's book at elementary school level.

## **Elan Ramon**

*Space Shuttle Columbia: Mission of Hope* (2013)  
PBS Documentary film

Several popular biographies are available for children and adults.

**Andrew Stern**

Steven Karras, *The Enemy I Knew: German Jews in the Allied Military in World War II*, Chapter 24, "Otto Stern," (Minneapolis, MN, 2009), pp. 263-7

Chapter covers 1LT Stern's grandfather. A note at end of chapter memorializes the grandson.