



# I Am a Jew

USMMA's Jewish Community,  
1942 to Present



American Merchant Marine Museum

# THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MUSEUM

## "Highlights in Leadership and Diversity" Series

- #1. *KP Women: Breaking the Gender Barrier* (2018)
- #2. *With Courage and Good Cheer: The Life of Peter Chue* (2021)
- #3. *A Long Way to Go: LGBTQ+ Seafarers, 1941-Present* (2022)
- #4. *"I Am a Jew": USMMA's Jewish Community, 1942 to Present* (2023)

**Front cover, left to right:** Alex Keisch ('67), Rear Admiral Krinsky, USMS ('50), Captain Diana Wolfson, USN ('96), William Bernstein ('44), Joseph Schwartzstein ('96), Leon Schneider ('44), Alexander Rosenberg ('69), Bernard Schultz ('44), Prof. Jane Brickman, Stacey Glass Heckmuller ('17).

## FOREWORD BY VICE ADMIRAL NUNAN



*VADM Joanna M. Nunan, USMS,  
Superintendent, USMMA.*

Diversity has always been a central value at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA). This is the only federal service academy that never practiced racial segregation and never required its students to march to chapel services, a practice abolished at the other academies in 1972. Furthermore, in 1974, USMMA was the first federal Academy to enroll women. Our student body is increasingly diverse and welcoming to all qualified young people. A truly national institution, the Academy attracts applicants from all fifty states, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

That isn't to say we are a perfect institution. However, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD), we are making a concerted effort to continue our tradition of diversity while upholding academic standards, the core Regimental values of respect, honor, and service, and USMMA's mission "To educate and graduate leaders of exemplary character who are inspired to serve the national security, marine transportation, and economic needs of the United States as licensed Merchant Marine Officers and commissioned officers in the Armed Forces." Respect for our diverse community is a crucial component in developing twenty-first-century officers. In studying the Academy's past, including our shortcomings, we hope to build a climate of inclusion and respect that prepares our graduates for a lifetime of service to the nation. In this spirit, we particularly admire Alex Keisch ('67), a Holocaust survivor who has worked for many years to end bullying and prejudice with the simple message, "We don't allow that here."

This year, we celebrate the Academy's Jewish community, including midshipmen, faculty, and staff. While the name of the first Jewish American cadet to attend USMMA is unknown, it almost certainly predated the establishment of the Kings Point campus. The reason for attending isn't hard to discern: in the 1930s and 1940s, New York City was both the nation's foremost port and home to the nation's largest Jewish community. The promise of free education, employment in the growing maritime industry, and the lure of sharp uniforms attracted many young Americans. This exhibit focuses on four Jews: Morton Deitz and Herman Rosen ('44), William Bernstein ('44), and Paul Krinsky ('50). These four represent the values USMMA attempts to instill in its graduates, including leadership under adverse conditions, taking strong moral stands, and demonstrating a lifelong commitment to service. In all regards, these four—and the many other Jewish graduates of the Academy—have demonstrated the essence of "Acta Non Verba."

In conjunction with the American Merchant Marine Museum, the Great Neck Jewish community, and Jewish alumni such as Alexander Rosenberg ('69), this exhibit honors the past and invites the Kings Point family to ponder and celebrate the Jewish experience at USMMA. I hope you embrace this opportunity to learn about this little-known facet of Academy life.

Acta Non Verba,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joanna M. Nunan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

VADM Joanna M. Nunan, USMS

## A JEWISH COMMUNITY



*Plebe Bernard Schultz in late 1943. Schultz was posthumously awarded the Pacific War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.*

During World War II, Cadet-Midshipman Bernard Schultz wrote a poem that began, "I am a Jew." In it, he expressed his empathy with Christian midshipmen, who teared up as they sang "peace on earth, goodwill to men," and confessed he teared up as well. In the poem, he lamented that humankind seemed to be eternally warring. Six months later, Schultz died in the South Pacific during his sea year, and his name is among the 142 midshipmen who laid down their lives in the service of their country.

William Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* pointed out that Jews were simply humans:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is?

More recently, in 2020, journalist Bari Weiss gave a powerful speech titled "I am a Jew." Weiss boldly refused to let antisemitism define her identity, proclaiming, "I am not a Jew because people hate my religion, my people, and my civilization."

Schultz, Shakespeare, and Weiss reflect broad swathes of the Jewish experience, hence the title of this exhibit, which has three goals. First, it dispels the myth that Jews don't serve the nation or go to sea. Second, it seeks to educate the USMMA community and the public about the presence of Jews here, including faculty, staff, and midshipmen. Third and finally, it will explore the lives of exemplary Jewish alumni and place them within a historical context.

In sum, USMMA is perhaps more Jewish than most people recognize, and it isn't just its location in Great Neck, which has a large Jewish population. Or as Alex Keisch ('67) put it, USMMA was "a gentile island in a Jewish sea." It isn't just the midshipmen, either. Many of our talented faculty and staff are Jews, and we have had a Jewish Superintendent, Rear Admiral Paul Krinsky, USMS ('50). Then there is the Merchant Marine's anthem, *Heave Ho!* Not only was it written by a Jewish officer in the U.S. Maritime Service, but he donated the rights to the song to USMMA. Jewish businessman, fashion designer, and philanthropist Henri Bendel built what we now call Wiley Hall. Many early cadet-midshipmen had their uniforms tailored by S. Appel & Co., a well-known Jewish tailoring firm. Jewish faculty, staff, midshipmen, alumni, and others have contributed enormously to the Academy, although many midshipmen were unaware of that fact.

Jewish faculty have enriched both of USMMA's professional departments. Captain Lawrence Jarett was an honored faculty member for over 50 years, serving as Professor of Maritime Law and Head of the Department of Maritime Law and Economics. He was also the first Head of the Department of Maritime Transportation, and spent a year (1966-1967) as Acting Dean of the Academy. He practiced the motto, "He who dares to teach must never cease to learn." Captain Ray Eisenberg was head of Shipboard Training and the Marine Transportation Department for many years. Jewish faculty continue in that department, including Capt. Jamie Rock, USMS.



*Moe Herschowitz toward the end of his career. He aptly described himself as a "coveralls engineer," focusing on practical application rather than theory. It was a good fit for USMMA's curriculum.*

In Marine Engineering, Moses “Moe” Herschowitz proved a tireless advocate for the Academy, who taught in that department from 1949 until 1995. He participated in developing and operating the N/S *Savannah*, the nuclear-powered merchant ship sponsored by the Eisenhower administration’s “Atoms for Peace” initiative. He was also a leader in forming the Dual License Officer program and the Nuclear Engineering curriculum.



*Prof. Al Stwertka was a Navy veteran and professor in USMMA’s Math and Science Department, including a stint as Department Head.*

Given the tradition of Jewish scholarship and the Academy’s proximity to many universities, it should be no surprise that many faculty members have been Jews, representing many facets of Judaism. For example, Prof. Al Stwertka of the Math and Science Department helped establish the *Savannah* nuclear propulsion program when he wasn’t playing violin for various ensembles. The Math and Science Department has had many other Jewish professors, such as Howard Beim, a chemistry professor who was also a determined and effective union leader. Another example is Prof. Michael Melcer who for almost thirty years has been a vocal and effective advocate for midshipmen in general, particularly Jewish midshipmen.



*Jacques Szaluta was a demanding but respected History professor. Few knew his father died in Auschwitz, and his mother barely survived incarceration in that same death camp.*

In the 1950s and 1960s, an influx of European Jews joined the faculty, especially the Humanities Department. They included Julius Balbin, a poet who taught foreign languages, whose arm bore the tattooed numbers the Nazis assigned

him in the death camps. Jacques Szaluta was another European refugee. As a boy, he had to hide in France from the Nazi occupiers before finding refuge in Switzerland. He came to this country on a Liberty ship in 1946. Szaluta specialized in psychohistory and, for many years, was the faculty advisor to the student newspaper *Hear This*, even after he retired.

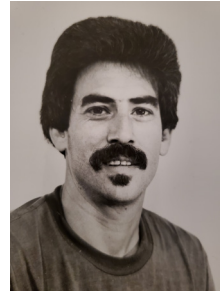
The life of Joseph Gitman is illustrative of these European-born Jewish faculty. Born in Poland, he graduated from the Warsaw Theological Seminary in 1939. He fled the Nazi invasion of 1939 for the supposed safety of the Soviet Union but found himself doing manual labor on collective farms and even in Gulags for a time. While he was in the USSR, the Nazis killed his entire family. After the war, he came to the U.S., became a citizen, and earned a Ph.D. in history at Yale University in 1963. Coincidentally, Gitman arrived on campus at the same time as Alex Keisch ('67), born in Poland to parents who fought the Nazis as partisans. Keisch spent his early years in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp operated by the U.S. Army before coming to the U.S. The Rabbi who oversaw Keisch's bar mitzvah was none other than Joe Gitman, who landed a job at the Academy just as Keisch entered his Plebe year. Ironically, despite the midshipman's determination to earn an "A," Gitman gave Keisch a "B" grade in his U.S. History class. Gitman later confessed he graded Keisch more harshly than others to prove he wasn't favoring him. Gitman served as the Academy's unofficial rabbi from 1966 to 1980.



*Alex Keisch taking a noon site with his sextant on board the SS United States in May 1968. He had come a long way from his birth in a Polish forest in the waning days of World War II. Courtesy Alex Keisch ('67).*



Jews have also enriched the Academy community in support services such as the mailroom, where David Tamarin has served for many years, or the Academy's print shop, where manager Steve Gitlin always had time to swap a humorous story or two. Several of the Academy's barbers were Jews who fled the Soviet Union. A special mention should go to an Alumni Association employee, Lisa Donitz, who has rendered long and active service.



*Brooklyn native Steve Gitlin began working at USM-MA after he got out of the Army.*

The Academy, however, exists for the education and support of our students, the midshipmen. Perhaps half a dozen observant Jews enter with each class, along with a small number of non-observant Jews as well. The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) used to present observant Jews with Bibles with their names embossed in gold on the cover at graduation. Between 1947 and 1967, the JWB provided 150 such Bibles to graduating midshipmen. In the 1940s, it handed out as many as eighteen Bibles at one graduation, while in 1966, only one was presented. During the 1980s, the number was typically five per year.

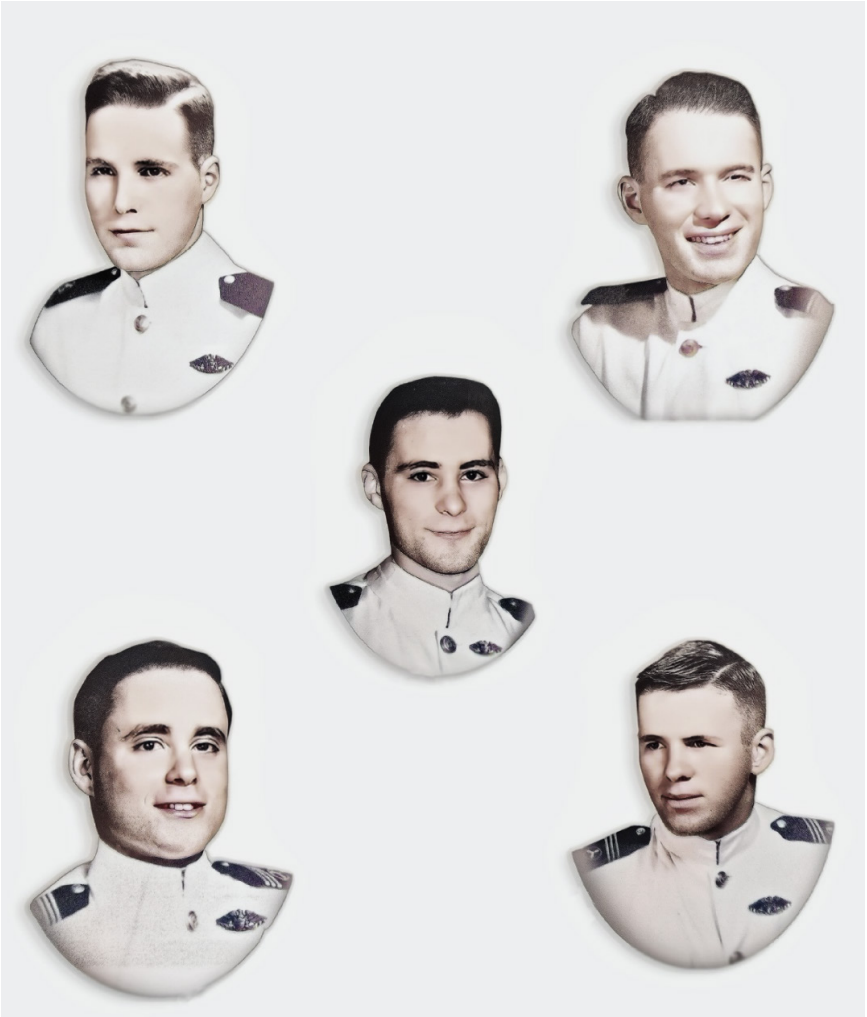


*First Classman Andrew Kadin receives a JWB Bible from Commander Joe Gitman, USMS, prior to graduation in 1978. Gitman was also a rabbi and a Humanities professor. Courtesy of Andrew Kadin ('78).*

There has been remarkable persistence among some Jewish families. The Rosenbergs have sent two generations to Kings Point, a noteworthy commitment to an institution that is only eighty years old. Alex Rosenberg ('69) jokes that he is the "un-official, un-ordained, un-paid, un-anointed, self-appointed rabbi/cantor of the Mariners' Memorial Chapel." His father, Allen Rosenberg, was a 1945 graduate, as were Alex's three uncles, Cy Rosenberg-Roberts ('50), Jack Rosenberg ('55), and Barry Rosenberg ('63). All were engineers nicknamed "Rosie," making Alex "Rosie #5." The five Rosenbergs had distinguished maritime careers. Allen sailed on the perilous "Murmansk Run" in World War II; Cy sailed in the Korean War, including at the Incheon landing; Jack was a chief engineer for States Marine/Isthmian Lines; Barry served on the supertankers *Manhattan* and *Transeastern* and co-owned a small shipping company; and Alex spent part of his sea year on the nuclear-powered N/S *Savannah* and went on to a career as a labor lawyer with many maritime clients. Cy, Jack, and Alex received the Alumni Association's Meritorious Alumni Service Award and Alex won the Outstanding Professional Achievement Award. Nor do the connections stop there: Alex's father-in-law Stanley "Sid" Unger ('44) was a senior executive for a major tanker and bulk carrier company and also received the Outstanding Professional Achievement Award, and Alex's cousin Jonathan Nitkin ('82) is a Biscayne Bay Harbor Pilot and a recipient of the Silver Mariner Award.

Alex Rosenberg remembers a small but vibrant community in the 1960s:

On most Friday evenings we had Shabbat services with a visiting Rabbi and an organist/soloist. These Friday evening services were a magnet that attracted most of the Jews in the regiment, so we got to mix with and become friendly with the upperclassmen. (Class rates did not exist in the Chapel). One Friday a month different women's groups in Great Neck, would bring in dinner (usually sandwiches from The Squire) and there usually were 4 to 6 Jewish young ladies. As an upperclassmen, especially when it was food night and looked like attendance would be small, I would bring a couple of non-Jewish friends to services so that they could see what Judaism was all about and so we did not have an unduly small crowd. Even though we were in different companies and sections, we Jews stuck together. None of us were shy about being Jewish.



*The five "Rosies." In two generations, the Rosenberg family sent five of their sons to USMMA, and all had successful maritime careers. Top right: Cy Rosenberg-Roberts ('50); Top left: Jack Rosenberg ('55); Center: Allen Rosenberg ('45); Bottom left: Alexander Rosenberg ('69); Bottom right: Barry Rosenberg ('63). Courtesy Alex Rosenberg.*

The Londynskys are another Jewish family whose history with USMMA spans generations, starting with Samuel ('44), who was a Panama Canal Pilot. His sons Jeffery ('76) and Paul ('80), also attended. Paul, who was a senior executive at Matson Lines, in turn sent his children Jonathan ('12) and Laurenann ('15).

As Great Neck became an increasingly Jewish community after World War II, local families and midshipmen frequently connected. Many midshipmen remember Jewish families who gladly opened their homes to Jewish midshipmen during the High Holidays. Larry Paper ('65) and many others recalled that this was especially important for Plebes, who otherwise wouldn't enjoy a home-cooked meal until Thanksgiving. One female midshipman remembered a local family would bring "giant bags of Jewish food to campus for me, and it was the best feeling having homemade matzo ball soup and rugelach." Sometimes Kings Point graduates settled in Great Neck or other nearby communities. Memorable among these are Harold ('54) and Johanna Essex, who have not only welcomed midshipmen into their home but long supported the Cookie Café, a popular tradition among all midshipmen.

## ANTISEMITISM

Some Jewish midshipmen such as Harold Essex ('54) recollect no antisemitism during his time at USMMA or in the Navy and attributed this in part to the presence of World War II veterans who would not abide prejudice. Others did experience problems. Alex Keisch ('67) remembers two classmates who bullied him relentlessly, egging each other on with loud laughter. Some reported uncomfortable conversations, such as Joe Schwartzstein ('96), who recalled

I had classmates ask why I was at Kings Point. I was told numerous times that "Jews do not serve." I had a great-grandfather that served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps as a private during World War I. My grandfather served in the U.S. Army in World War II, rising to the rank of Major, and my father is a graduate of West Point. So it was hard for me to understand that thinking.

I also had classmates ask me why Jews are so wealthy. Their first exposure to Jews was the Jews in Great Neck and me. I had to explain that not all Jews are rich and that we are just like everyone else.

Ronald Coles ('62) recalled another incident demonstrating a prevalent idea among the ill-informed that Jews had vestigial horns. A fellow Plebe, who Coles allowed to feel his scalp for horns, was disappointed when he found none.

Another Jewish stereotype prevalent in the early and mid-twentieth century was that Jews were un-athletic "momma's boys," especially those from better-off families. For example, Walter S. Nicholes ('44) recounted in his memoir *The Seagoing Years: Memories of a Boy at War* that he had three roommates, one of them an observant Jew:

Jacob was short, just made the minimum height requirement, was sort of roly-poly, and came from an affluent New York City Jewish family. That's all we really learned of his previous life and, sadly, we were unable to connect with him as a roommate. To this day, I don't know why but I suspect a real reason was that Jack, Lee and I, though we would have denied it, held a deeply ingrained anti-Semitic bias.

Jacob bore up under teasing and hijinks, never showing anger. Nonetheless, one night while his roommates were on liberty, he left with his gear. While he graduated, he "divorced himself from the Academy" and never attended reunions. The irony of the

“momma’s boy” stereotype is that many of the Jews attending the Academy during World War II were demonstrably tough mariners. For example, Leon Schneider (‘44) grew up in some of the rougher neighborhoods of Brooklyn. He was an ordinary seaman in the opening months of World War II and was torpedoed twice before applying to Kings Point. Gene Tepper (‘43) ran away to sea as a teenager using his Bar Mitzvah money. The USMMA magazine *Polaris* reported how Tepper turned the tables on those who thought Jewish men were soft: “I was an ordinary seaman with the U.S. Lines, and the director of unlicensed personnel told me about the Cadet Corps and he encouraged me to join the Corps. I always thought Cadets were sissies, but I learned different when I joined.”

There have also been incidents in the barracks. Barry Deutsch (‘63) recalled finding a Nazi flag pinned to a wall in a storage locker. He reported the matter to regimental officers, who quickly investigated and took down the offending hate symbol. During World War II, Leon Schneider had an antisemitic sea partner. Schneider expressed deep satisfaction in salty language that the antisemite flunked out of USMMA. Much of the antisemitism was not overt but small asides, comments, or jokes that made people uncomfortable.



*Leon Schneider (‘44) took this lifeboat photo of his shipmates from the SS Scottsburg when torpedoed in 1942. Note that this was before he came to USMMA. Courtesy Schneider family.*

A non-Jewish graduate from the early 1980s remembers, “Back then bigoted remarks, including towards those who are Jewish, were tolerated and considered acceptable. As a young person, I never imagined I would find myself in a position //at a federal service academy// of having to hear and respond to (with condemnation) a Jewish slur or racist remark.” Jewish midshipmen who asserted their identity were especially targeted, such as the midshipman who wore a yarmulke daily after discovering Navy regulations allowed it. A hostile or indifferent shipboard

climate can make for a difficult sea-year experience or on campus. One current midshipman keeps kosher on shipboard. When asked how she is able to do so, she simply replied, "beef jerky." The climate on campus could also be uncomfortable. Carolyn Kurtz ('86) recalls arriving on campus and suddenly being surrounded by people who had never met a Jew. She remembered "a lot of ignorant comments, anti-semitic slurs, they were used to everyone being white and Christian and did not understand there were other people on the planet." For example, bargaining to get a lower purchase price was often called "Jewing."

Incidents of antisemitism also occurred off-campus. Barry Deutsch recalled that a German family invited him to dine with them during his sea year. After he politely refused to eat pork, he noted the family's demeanor became notably frosty. Kings Pointers also faced discrimination after they graduated. In his autobiography *Leon: A Life*, Leon Schneider recalled Egyptian pilots coming on board his ship and asking if there were any Jews on board. If he had said "yes," the Egyptian authorities would have locked Jewish crew in their rooms with an armed guard outside during the transit through the Suez Canal. Instead, Schneider told the authorities that he was German, ordinary seaman Rudinoff was Russian, and the messman Steinberg was Mexican. Schneider said it was the only time in his life he denied being a Jew. Even in the U.S., incidents occurred. Joe Schwartzstein ('96) recalled his superiors coercing him to wear an Easter Bunny costume at a company event. This would have been demeaning to any apprentice pilot, but his faith compounded the humiliation.

It is easy to focus on the negative, but one of the more pleasant episodes in the Academy's history was the public thanks Christian midshipmen gave to their Jewish counterparts. In late December 1943, Jewish midshipmen stood all watches, releasing their Christian counterparts to observe the Christmas holiday. *Polaris* published a public thanks: "We salute you Jewish gentlemen for your most commendable spirit and cooperation." The tradition of Jewish students volunteering to take Christmas Eve and Christmas Day watches continued as late as 1969, passed on informally by one class of Jewish students to the next.

## MORT DEITZ, HANK ROSEN, AND THE LIFEBOAT

World War II saw the greatest number of Jews attending USMMA. Jews, on the whole, were over-represented in the armed forces, 5% versus 3.5% of the nation's population.

There seem to be about eight Jews among the 142 cadet-midshipmen who died during their sea year, or about 5.6%. While that number remains unconfirmed, they are likely the following:

Irwin S. Ebel, Brooklyn, NY  
Mayer Egenthal, Brooklyn, NY  
Leonard L. Ehrlich, Brooklyn, NY  
Ralph J. Kohlmeyer, Rego Park, NY  
David Pitzeley, Bronx, NY  
Jay Rosenbloom, Kansas City, MO  
Bernard Schultz, Brooklyn, NY  
Samuel Schuster, Philadelphia, PA



*Cadet-Midshipman  
Herman E. Rosen  
before going to sea,  
circa 1943.*

More research remains to be done, including determining how many Jewish graduates died in World War II and how many were in the "Tin Fish Club," meaning they survived their ship sinking due to enemy action during their sea year. Two of them were Morton Deitz and Herman Rosen ('44).

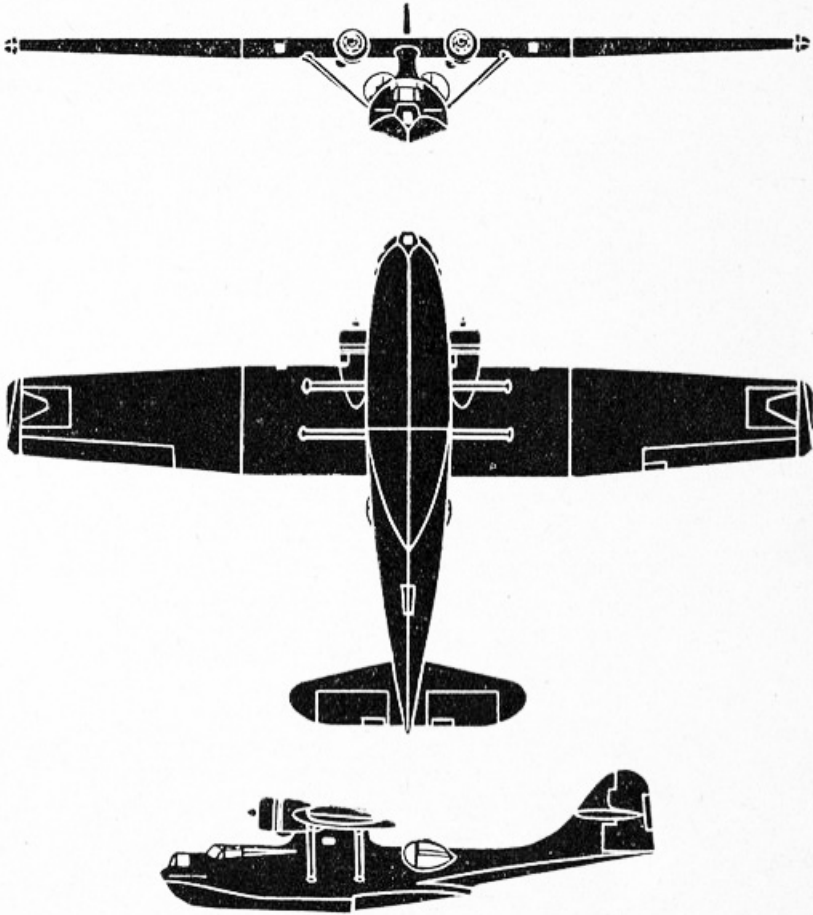
Luckily, we have written accounts from Herman "Hank" Rosen. As Rosen recalled in his book *Gallant Ship, Brave Men: The Heroic Story of a World War II Liberty Ship*, he had always wanted to go to sea, having read books like *Two Years Before the Mast*, *Moby Dick*, and *Mutiny on the Bounty*. An ad in the magazine *Popular Mechanics* caught his attention. There was an image of a young man in a midshipman's uniform. Rosen reported to Kings Point in March 1942 for an accelerated eighteen-month program. Then Rosen reported with three other cadets, including Mort Deitz, to join their ship, the SS *John Drayton*, for sea year.



The *John Drayton* was a brand-new Liberty ship bound for Persia (modern Iran) loaded with supplies for the Soviet Union. It went first to Cuba, where it had some repairs, then transited the Panama Canal to the west coast of South America, rounded Cape Horn, crossed the South Atlantic into the Indian Ocean, and ultimately to the Persian Gulf. It sailed alone, taking this circuitous route to avoid U-boats. Once in Persia, Mort Deitz was surprised to bump into Sephardic Jews, whom he had never encountered before. Deitz was an Ashkenazi Jew, and was frustrated that he couldn't communicate with them in Yiddish, which he assumed all Jews spoke.

Trouble arose on its return voyage. On April 21, 1943, the crew spotted a surfaced submarine about three hundred miles off Durban, South Africa. At 8:19 p.m., a torpedo struck the *John Drayton* in the engine room on the starboard side, killing Engine Cadet Jack Stadstad and two others. Rapidly and silently, the crew abandoned ship. The lifeboats almost immediately lost contact with one another. Twenty-four men were in Deitz's and Rosen's lifeboat. They decided to sail for South Africa, hoping, in the meantime, to be seen by a rescue plane or ship. High seas swamped the boat and within several hours the elderly chief mate committed suicide by dropping himself into the water. On the third day, they saw a South African PBY patrol aircraft. Elated and confident of rescue, they opened the water cask, gulped large mouthfuls of water, opened cans of pemmican, and passed them around. But it was a cruel tease. The weather worsened and a messman began ranting, "I have to get out of here!" before he plunged himself over the side. Five days later, another man did the same thing.

On the sixth day, another PBY swooped low and dropped a package, on which was written "Destroyer leaving Durban." Inside were cans of drinking water and some emergency rations. But the destroyer never showed up, and the weather worsened, upending the boat and throwing the seamen into the sea. Somehow they managed to get back in, but all their supplies and tools were gone except for the oars, a chart case, a bucket, a drinking cup, and a hatchet. On day twenty-two, a rainstorm gave them some reprieve, allowing them to drink their fill and wash some of the encrusted sea salt off them. Nonetheless, another man died after drinking all the remaining fresh water. They dropped his corpse into the sea.



*PBY Catalina patrol aircraft, often referred to as "flying boats." Mort Deitz and Hank Rosen saw several such aircraft from their lifeboat, and a South African PBY eventually saw them, too, leading to their rescue.*

Hope was now running out. Deitz intoned Hebrew prayers, and another man died. Then another PBY flying boat appeared almost overhead. The pilot waved to the lifeboat before flying off. There was a restrained joy, as Rosen related, "We wondered whether he would return. Would they find us? Hours passed and we grew convinced it was another cruel hoax. Deep gloom settled into the boat." At this time, Cadet Tom Kellegrew died just hours before a Greek cargo vessel rescued them. Rosen and others had survived thirty days adrift.

Deitz was comatose when rescued. While recovering in a South African hospital, Deitz told hospital staff that “his religion was a factor” in his survival and that he “felt that he was being looked after.” Still suffering from his injuries, USMMA disenrolled him as physically unfit to serve. He suffered from nightmares for decades. He was extremely reticent about his lifeboat ordeal, never speaking about it to his children, who described it as a taboo subject.

Rosen fared better, but also spent weeks in a hospital recovering. Ordinarily weighing 140 pounds, he now weighed a mere 97. Nonetheless, his postcard to his girlfriend breezily downplayed his ordeal by starting the note, “We caught a tin fish . . .”

While he could have claimed a medical disability and not returned, after a few months of recovery, Rosen reported back to USMMA in September 1943. He resumed his studies, became the student editor of the Academy’s magazine, *Polaris*, and his peers inducted him into

the “Tin Fish Club.” His section-mates were in awe of his experience, mistakenly believing Rosen and others had committed cannibalism by eating the *John Drayton’s* chief mate. He graduated on June 6, 1944.

Despite continued medical problems, Rosen sailed on his license for several years before “swallowing the anchor” and pursuing a career ashore. He eventually became the Associate National Director of the United Jewish Appeal. In 1978, he reconnected with Deitz, who had become a successful tax attorney.

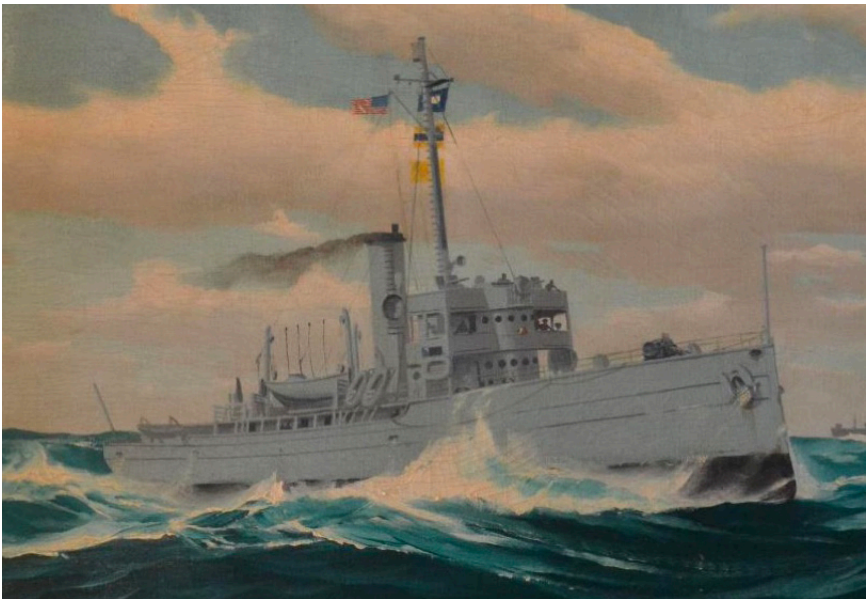
In 1998, the Russian Federation awarded Rosen a medal for supplying the Soviet Union in World War II. In 2007 he testified before Congress to advocate for benefits for World War II merchant mariners. He died in 2013, almost seventy years after being torpedoed and just sixteen days shy of his ninety-fourth birthday.



*Lucky to be alive. Hank Rosen in hospital in Durban, South Africa.*

## SEAGOING MACCABEES

One of the significant developments after World War II was the creation of a Jewish state: Israel. To many, it seemed only right after the horrors of the Holocaust that a Jewish state be created. Furthermore, the surviving Jews of Europe should have the right to move from Displaced Persons (DP) camps to their ancestral homeland, which the British ruled and knew as Palestine. Jews had been moving to Palestine in defiance of British imperial authority since 1920. This clandestine migrant movement known as *Aliyah Bet* culminated in several dramatic incidents in 1947 and 1948. American Jews helped fund this effort, secretly buying about a dozen ships to smuggle thousands of Jews across the Mediterranean and to Palestine. However, the British opposed *Aliyah Bet* and deployed the Royal Navy to halt any such vessels.



*A Kings Point training vessel in Aliyah Bet. Built for the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service on the Great Lakes in 1897, the USRC Gresham saw duty in the U.S. Navy during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and in the U.S. Coast Guard after that service was created in 1915. Lt. Hunter Wood, USMS, produced this oil painting of Gresham while it was a training vessel at USMMA from 1944-1946. Aliyah Bet bought the Gresham in 1947 at scrap value. AMMM 1947.015.0001.*

One of these ships was the surplus U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Gresham*. This was an elderly vessel deactivated in the 1930s and scheduled for scrapping when World War II broke out. The *Gresham* soon proved to be too old for active service, and it ended up at USMMA for two years before a newer surplus vessel replaced it. Aliyah Bet purchased the old cutter, renamed it *Hatikoah* (The Hope), and somehow jammed over 1400 DPs on board the 205-foot-long vessel. Unfortunately, the British intercepted this vessel and impounded its passengers in Cyprus. However, the ship's life was not over: it served in the Israeli Navy from 1948 until retired in 1951.

Buying ships was the easy part; but how could crews be found to operate on these desperate journeys? Many Jewish mariners from North America and Europe volunteered, including five USMMA graduates. The story of Kings Point's Aliyah Bet mariners is not well known. They and the other seafarer volunteers were "seagoing Maccabees," a reference to Jewish freedom fighters from ancient times, implying an inner spirit and determination. The story of USMMA's seagoing Maccabees is one of grit and determination to do what they believed was right, even if they had to lay down their lives. Research thus far has identified these Kings Pointers who worked for Aliyah Bet: Eugene Alexander, Marvin Bacaner, David Baum, William Bernstein, and Marvin Rosenberg, all of whom graduated in 1944.

Leon Schneider was almost among their number. Jewish operatives somehow found him and urged him to participate in Aliyah Bet. Schneider wasn't sure; while he supported the idea of Israel, he also supported his parents by paying their rent. The agents responded it would all be taken care of. Schneider agreed but was studying to upgrade his license to chief mate. One day, he received a phone call demanding he leave that night to sail for Palestine on the SS *Exodus*. Schneider was one day from completing his upgrade exam and counter-offered to leave tomorrow. The agent said they would find someone else, and they did—Schneider's classmate Bill Bernstein ('44). In his autobiography *Leon: A Life*, Schneider bemoans his shortsightedness: "I was one day away from being a part of Jewish history."



*As a young merchant marine officer, Leon Schneider almost became one of the "seagoing Maccabees." Courtesy Schneider family.*

Schneider was not religious, proclaiming himself in his autobiography as "Jewish, culinary-style." Nevertheless, he grew up in Brooklyn surrounded by Jewish life and Yiddish language, and while at USMMA took leave on Friday nights to attend Jewish services.

The Kings Pointers who joined Aliyah Bet were not very religious, and this was common in the movement. As described in Aviva Halamish's book *The Exodus Af-*

*fair*, the volunteers' primary motivation was the guilt felt by many American Jews who had not directly experienced the Holocaust atrocities. The American journalist I.F. Stone wrote they "were simply American sailors who happened to be Jews, boys with little if any past contact with Jewish life. They spoke neither Yiddish nor Hebrew. They were not very articulate, but for them the trip was more than a heroic adventure. They all felt deeply about the treatment of the Jews in Europe and this was their way of doing something about it." Eugene D. Alexander ('44) is representative of Stone's ideas, recalling late in life that "We never celebrated Jewish holidays and I wasn't Bar Mitzvahed. In fact I'm still not quite sure what the Jewish holidays are, and I never lived in a Jewish community. Strangely, I have always felt Jewish." During his sea year, he sailed to the Middle East and met some Palestinian Jews with whom he liked to drink. After graduation, he served in the Navy in the Pacific. After his discharge, Aliyah Bet recruited him and he participated in several operations to bring European Jews to Palestine. At one point, the British imprisoned him in Cyprus.

Two Kings Pointers were firmly linked to Zionism, a movement supporting the creation and maintenance of a Jewish state. David Baum was a Brooklyn Jew who was active in Zionist groups from childhood. During his sea year, he worked on board an American-Export Lines freighter, and after graduation in 1944 he sailed on

Liberty ships. In 1946 he was among the first Americans to be recruited for the Aliyah Bet movement, and in 1948 Baum was among the founding officers in the Israeli Navy. Late in life he recalled, "For me the most important and meaningful accomplishment was doing something for the survivors and the Yishuv (Jews who had settled in Palestine). All the tons of arms which I had helped to deliver to the former Soviet Union, and to the U.S. Army in Europe and to the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor may not have saved one Jewish life. But the Aliyah Bet operation was a positive act." He passed away in Israel in 2010. In 2013, the Alumni Association recognized Baum for his heroism.

Marvin "Bucky" Bacaner also grew up in the Habonim youth Zionist movement. A graduate of USMMA's marine engineering program, he helped convert Canadian naval vessels into transport vessels for Jewish refugees. The work took place at City Island, just across Long Island Sound from the Academy. Unfortunately, on Bacaner's first voyage to Palestine, the British captured him, and he languished in an internment camp for several months. Bacaner remained deeply committed to Israel throughout his life. He died in 2019.

Marvin Rosenberg was different from the other Kings Pointers who joined Aliyah Bet in that he had seen service in the U.S. Navy after graduation. To date, not much information has surfaced regarding his participation in Aliyah Bet, but he may have been on board the *Hatikvah* when the British captured it, and suffered impoundment in Cyprus. He died in Florida in 2016.

## **BILL BERNSTEIN**



*Bill Bernstein on board the President Warfield while it was undergoing repairs in Baltimore. Courtesy U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

The most famous of these sea-going Maccabees was William Bernstein. Born in Passaic, New Jersey in 1923, his family moved to San Francisco when he was thirteen. Like Hank Rosen, Bill also had some education under his belt before enrolling at Kings Point. He attended Ohio State University, where he was a premedical student, but left to attend USMMA, graduating in 1944. In 1947 he volunteered for Aliyah Bet.

Like the 250 American merchant mariners who volunteered for Aliyah Bet, Bernstein was not religious. His brother Moe expressed perplexity regarding Bill's motivation, concluding:

"He was not connected with any Jewish organizations. It was the experience with the refugees in Europe that decided him." Volunteering for Aliyah Bet may also have been an act of youthful rebellion. Bernstein wrote to his mother, saying: "You ask me to settle down, go to school. That's all very fine, Mom, but one doesn't find happiness by continually telling himself he's happy. Don't you think I would like a nice wife and kids and a good job? Of course I would, but I can't do that now. I say this knowing that your thoughts and heart are with me wherever I am and whatever I'm doing." Furthermore, Bernstein vowed to his brother to continue assisting Europe's Jews until the last one got out.

As one of the few professional mariners on board the ship, Bernstein was initially horrified, writing to his brother while the ship was undergoing repairs in the U.S., "But the crew! We have everything aboard except sailors." With time, he became more accepting: "The motley mess of philosophers, mathematicians, and assorted intellectuals, have begun to shape up into some sort of good work-



ing crew. . . . The ship is beginning to run like a ship and the sailors are beginning to act like seamen. . . . The crew is really catching on." The crew, for their part, liked Bernstein, one shipmate describing him as "this little guy. . . with red hair and who was always horsing around."

The ship Bernstein volunteered for was the *President Warfield*, a Chesapeake Bay excursion liner launched in 1928. It was not designed to cross the oceans, but it served under British and American flags transporting troops in the English Channel. At the war's end, it returned to the U.S. and sat in the James River while the government arranged to have it scrapped. Aliyah Bet procured the vessel in 1946, using a front company to disguise its purpose. The *President Warfield* was one of about eleven ships bought by Americans to carry European Jews to Palestine. They were smaller vessels, including surplus Royal Canadian Navy corvettes, aged yachts, former Coast Guard cutters, and banana boats.

According to David C. Holly's book *Exodus 1947*, the *President Warfield* was now in sorry shape. Much of the upper wooden works were rotten and electrical fires were commonplace. The vessel was initially overrun with rats, but forays led by Bernstein diminished their numbers. Nonetheless, repairs commenced at Baltimore, and it sailed for Europe in February 1947. It almost immediately ran into a fierce storm that nearly sank the vessel. With the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard, the aging steamer limped into Norfolk, Virginia. After repairs in Philadelphia, the *President Warfield* again set forth and crossed the ocean without incident.

Eventually, the ship entered the small seaside resort of Sète, France. British agents carefully tracked the vessel to stop it from embarking Palestine-bound refugees. With the collusion of French officials, 4,530 Holocaust survivors from DP camps boarded the ship, which was designed to carry 560. Conditions were horrific. That many bodies represented a colossal weight that could be a stability problem if the passengers rushed to one side. Hygiene was problematic, as was the prevalent seasickness and diarrhea. The water supply was small and carefully doled out.

As British protests grew, French cooperation halted, and the steamer hastily put to sea, bound for Palestine. All pretense of an innocent voyage was dropped, and the ship bore a new name befitting

its mission: *Exodus 1947*. Bernstein wrote in a last letter to his family, "This is it. After weeks of working, hiding and chasing all over Europe . . . we are finally on our way." He continued, "The chances of getting through are slim. We will do our best, but the important thing is that these people are out of Europe and will end up with their own people sooner or later."

British warships immediately began tracking the passenger ship's progress, with the occasional RAF aircraft flying overhead. Gradually a small flotilla trailed the *Exodus*, including the cruiser HMS *Ajax*. A British officer used a megaphone to warn that they suspected the ship was carrying illegal immigrants to Palestine and that it would be boarded if it continued. But the officers of *Exodus* knew the British could not touch them in international waters and kept steaming eastward.

On July 18, 1947, when the ship was about twenty nautical miles from its destination, the British sent a radio message demanding it stop. Conflict was now unavoidable. The night before, Bernstein told his shipmates about a premonition that he would die in the battle that lay ahead. Both sides prepared for a struggle that, while physical, was not intended to be lethal, as neither side wanted bad publicity. At 2:30 a.m., British warships illuminated the *Exodus* from



*DPs patiently waiting to board the Exodus 1947. Courtesy of The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

stem to stern. Bernstein repeatedly blew the steam whistle, alerting everyone that the battle was on. A destroyer crashed alongside the *Exodus* on either side. British marines and sailors, armed with side-arms and clubs, boarded despite the efforts of the passengers and crew, who resisted with shouts, fists, and throwing cans of food and even potatoes. After a fierce melee, the boarding party reached the wheelhouse. Bernstein picked up a fire extinguisher to repel the sailors. The sailors clubbed him, and he lost consciousness. The British soon took control of the ship and took it to Haifa, despite continued resistance. The steamer was now a shambles and its superstructure wracked out of shape, but a blue and white flag with the star of David, the “Magen David,” remained defiantly flying.

The very next day, the British forcibly transferred the refugees to three merchant ships, which returned them to Hamburg, Germany. This callous treatment further embittered relations between Jews and the British. Furthermore, the spectacle of Holocaust survivors being forcibly returned to Germany inflamed world opinion against Britain and its Jewish exclusion policy.



*Exodus 1947 coming alongside a Haifa pier. After the melee with the Royal Navy, the vessel was essentially a wreck. “Hans Pinn Studio Press Photograph of the Exodus 1947 Docked in Haifa Harbor, Palestine” (1947). Bulmash Family Holocaust Collection. 2021.1.12, <https://digital.kenyon.edu/bulmash/1714>.*

Bill Bernstein died shortly after *Exodus* arrived in port. He was buried in Martyrs' Row in the Haifa Cemetery. Bernie Marks and other crewmates acted as pallbearers, carrying his body, wrapped in an American flag, as some 7,000 spectators looked on. According to Ruth Gruber in *Exodus 1947: The Ship that Launched a Nation*, one of Bernstein's shipmates expressed confusion, "Bill, Bill, Bill—I was carrying Bill's body—in Palestine. It didn't make any sense." In San Francisco, his mother received a telegram that read, "Today we stand at attention at the grave of this young American Jew who made the supreme sacrifice while bringing the remnants of our people to our homeland." The telegram was simply signed "Haganah," the name of the Jewish independence organization.

Bernstein's role was not forgotten. Jewish organizations ran full-page ads commemorating his sacrifice. On July 24, a rally was held at Madison Square Park to express solidarity and outrage in memory of the victims of the shipboard battle with the British, especially Bernstein, and to protest the deportation of the *Exodus* immigrants from Palestine. Twenty thousand people took part.

Popular opinion turned against the British worldwide after the *Exodus* incident. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly, still located in Lake Success, NY, voted in favor of a plan to establish a Jewish state alongside an Arab state in Palestine. Rosenberg family tradition has it that Jewish midshipmen huddled in the room of Ted Teplow ('50) listening to the radio as the vote took place and burst into cheers when the resolution passed. Teplow's uncle was a Boston lawyer and ardent Zionist named Dewey David Stone, the man who purchased the *President Warfield* for Aliyah Bet. Within months of the vote, after months of violent struggle, British forces evacuated Palestine on May 14, 1948. That same day leaders in Tel Aviv declared the creation of the first modern Jewish state: Israel.



Exodus crewmembers carry Bill Bernstein's body to his grave in Haifa as thousands of spectators look on. Courtesy of U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.



New York Jews protest in support of the Exodus DPs. Bevin is a reference to British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, who was behind the plan to send the DPs back to Germany. "Press Photograph of Americans Protesting British Navy Commandeering of the Exodus 1947" (1947). Bulmash Family Holocaust Collection. 2021.1.11. <https://digital.kenyon.edu/bulmash/1713>

## PAUL KRINSKY

Paul Krinsky ('50) was born in Brooklyn. He started his USMMA training at the Cadet Basic School in San Mateo, California but transferred to Kings Point in 1947. He frequently attended Friday night services in what is now the Astronaut Elliot M. See Conference Room, often led by a Rabbi from Great Neck's Reform Temple. As he remembers it, he and fellow Jews were "a small group, not particularly close-knit, but we usually showed up for the service, probably out of a sense of obligation to preserve our identity."



*Jewish services in what is now the Astronaut Elliot M. See Room circa 1959, approximately the time Krinsky returned to campus as an instructor.*

Krinsky graduated with honors in 1950, at which time his parents donated a Jewish antique ceremonial spice box to the Academy. As a top graduate, he landed a position with United States Lines, most notably on the S.S. *United States* as third mate on its record-shattering maiden voyage across the Atlantic in 1952. In 1958, after a stint in the Navy, Krinsky returned to Kings Point to teach. Early in his teaching career at USMMA, he attended the dedication of the new Academy Chapel. Krinsky steadily climbed up USMMA's admin-

istrative leadership. He became Director of Admissions in 1965 and Academic Dean in 1973, despite not holding a Ph.D. In 1985 he was named Deputy Superintendent, culminating in his appointment as USMMA's seventh Superintendent in 1987, the second Kings Pointer to hold that position, which he held until retiring in June 1993.

Throughout his career Krinsky advocated for positive leadership, making a point of speaking informally with as many midshipmen as possible. He opposed hazing, seeking a gentler Plebe experience with less bullying. Joe Schwartzstein ('96) described Krinsky as a "wonderfully kind and caring man." He remembers being a Plebe and going to Krinsky's home on campus, Quarters A, for holiday meals. Not only was the food better than that served in the midshipman dining hall, but Krinsky and his wife Audrey provided a welcoming environment. Schwartzstein also recalls a formal inspection during which Krinsky came to his room. To the disbelief of the Regimental Commander and others, Admiral and Plebe chatted for perhaps ten minutes, during which Krinsky inquired after Schwartzstein's family. Then Krinsky said goodbye and that the room looked great, even though he didn't inspect it. According to Schwartzstein, "the rest of my deck couldn't believe what happened."



As an Honors graduate of USMMA, Krinsky received a job offer from U.S. Lines, the most prestigious steamship line in the country. He served as a mate on both the SS America and the SS United States, pictured here on its record-shattering maiden voyage across the Atlantic. If you look closely, you can see his signature. AMMM 2023.004R.0001.

Krinsky did not wear his faith on his sleeve. As he recalled it both as a midshipman and a staff member, religion was not an issue or even a topic of discussion. However, as Superintendent, he placed a mezuzah on the doorframe of Quarters A, and Jewish midshipmen remembered him as a reassuring presence. In reminiscing on the importance of religion in his career, Krinsky stated

For many years I was the most senior Academy official of the Jewish faith and served as a liaison between the Jewish midshipmen, the Senior Chaplain and the visiting Rabbi. The number of Jewish students was always small and it was sometimes difficult to maintain Chapel attendance on Friday evenings but interested midshipmen always seemed to pop up to keep the program alive. In the early 1980s I accompanied a group to attend services at the new Jewish Chapel at West Point and we had a wonderful time. At graduation in 1993, on the eve of my retirement, I attended the Bar Mitzvah of two “born again” Jewish graduates, held in the Jewish Chapel on campus. Before leaving Kings Point my wife and I donated a silver Menorah to the Jewish Chapel in appreciation of our time at the Academy and in recognition of the Chapel’s service to the Jewish community on campus.



*Rear Admiral Paul Krinsky, shortly before he retired. Note his Merchant Marine Naval Reserve pin, an item worn with great pride at USMMA.*

Krinsky also engaged with Great Neck’s Jewish community as no other Superintendent had. This included getting married at Temple Beth-El, speaking at local synagogues, leading the local Memorial Day parade as Grand Marshal in 1989, and hosting Academy “open houses” that allowed the public to visit the Academy. His elegant portrait, which hangs in Wiley Hall, portrays a man at the peak of his career, comfortable in his success. He was the first Jew to serve as Superintendent of a federal service academy, a notable historic milestone.





*Rear Admiral Paul L. Krinsky, USMS, Class of 1950, Seventh Superintendent, USMMA 1987-1993. This painting is on display in Wiley Hall along with the portraits of other former Superintendents. Oil portrait by Margaret Holland Sargent. AMMM 2012.001R.0853.*

## TO THE PRESENT

During his time at USMMA, Paul Krinsky witnessed two major events: The completion of a multifaith chapel on campus in 1961 and the admission of women in 1974. Both had a significant impact on USMMA's Jewish community.

The spiritual needs of cadet-midshipmen were not a priority when the Academy was created. Unlike all the other federal service academies, USMMA never had mandatory chapel services, a practice halted by federal courts in 1972. The former music room in Wiley Hall served as a chapel for Protestants, Christians, and Jews. However, following the war, the drive for a multifaith chapel at the Academy to memorialize the merchant seamen who died in World War II unified the alumni, the Board of Visitors, and Superintendent Gordon McLintock. In 1948 Congress authorized the construction of a chapel "for religious worship by any denomination, sect or religion" to be built with privately raised funds.



*Jewish chapel dedication, May 14th, 1961. From left to right: Commander Larry Jarett, USMS; Mr. Joselyn M. Shore of Temple Beth-El; Rabbi Aaron Blumenthal, National Jewish Welfare Board; Rabbi Hirsch E.L. Freund; Rear Admiral Gordon McLintock, USMS; Midshipman Joel H. Nussbaum. Courtesy Joel H. Nussbaum ('61).*

Jews and Christians cooperated in raising funds for a multifaith chapel with separate Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish chapels on the lower level and a multifaith sanctuary on the main level that could seat five hundred. The Jewish chapel received the official but seldom-used name "Chapel of Eternal Light." Prominent among those who steered the Chapel to its completion in 1961 was Melvin J. Tublin ('49), a past President of the Alumni Association and a member of its Board of Directors and already well on his way to becoming a renowned admiralty lawyer.

On May 14, 1961, leading Jewish rabbis participated in consecrating the chapel in a ceremony in the sanctuary. Among these were Rabbi Aaron Blumenthal, chairman of the National Jewish Welfare Board, who gave the consecration address. Also involved was Captain Joshua Goldberg, USNR, the senior Jewish Chaplain on active duty in the U.S. Navy. Rabbi Goldberg, who lost most of his family to the Holocaust, also donated an old family Torah to the Chapel.



*Midshipmen Barry Rosenberg, Sidney Shapiro, and Bruce Brotman bring the Torah from the Ark of the Jewish altar.*

One of the novel elements in the sanctuary was a three-sided altar that sits on an automatic turntable. Its three sides correspond to the three predominant faiths in the U.S. in the early 1960s: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. With the touch of a button, the altar turns, allowing different faiths to make use of the sanctuary, and many Jewish services and weddings have been held there. Appropriately, the first bar mitzvah service held there was for one of Prof. Joe Gitman's sons in 1965.

In a sense, the dedication of the chapel represented the apex of the Jewish experience at Kings Point, with Judaism recognized as co-equal with Christianity. Joe Gitman volunteered as the

unofficial rabbi and often conducted Friday night services until his retirement. However, since Admiral Krinsky's retirement, its use has been sporadic. Sometimes faculty such as Prof. Michael Melcer and alumni such as Alex Rosenberg organize major events, such as the 2015 rededication of the Memorial Chapel's three Torah scrolls, which drew about one hundred attendees.



*Stacey Glass Heckmuller ('17) at the time of the 2015 Torah rededication.*



*Alex Rosenberg ('69) organized the 2015 Torah rededication.*



*The Memorial Chapel's sanctuary during the 2015 Torah rededication.*



*Dr. Jane Pacht Brickman was one of the first female professors on campus.*

Women began attending USM-MA in 1974, and it wasn't long before Jewish female midshipmen appeared on campus. They faced bigotry both as women and Jews, but primarily the former. As Carolyn Kurtz ('86) put it, "being a woman there was a primary thing, and being Jewish was secondary." Jewish alumni and their spouses proved supportive of women, including Julie Berke, wife of Herman Berke ('44). She offered \$10,000 to the first alumna to earn an unlimited deck license and the same amount for the first female graduate to make chief engineer.

More support arrived on campus as female Jewish faculty such as Jane Brickman came on board in 1981. While she found the prevalent sexism on campus challenging, she soon found a niche for herself as an advocate for all female midshipmen throughout her long career. Notably, the American Jewish Congress Commission for Women's Equality recognized her work, among many other awards.

Female midshipmen such as Stacey Glass Heckmuller ('17) recalled as a Plebe having the one room with Hanukkah decorations instead of Christmas trees. She also found strength in interacting with cadets from other service academies at Jewish Warrior Weekends held at West Point. Furthermore, she supported incoming Jewish midshipmen with bagels or holding a Passover seder. As a First Classman and Regimental Commander (RC), she occasionally did "grace" at lunch in Hebrew or read Hebrew prayers for the Festival of Lights and the Graduation Convocation.

Of course, the goal of midshipmen is to graduate and serve the nation, ideally in the maritime industry. Jewish alumni, both men and

women, have become successful shipmasters, engineers, pilots, naval officers, admiralty lawyers, and maritime executives. Successful alumni such as Leo Berger ('43), Theodore Herzl Teplow ('50) and Gene Landy ('55) have been generous donors to the Academy. The Alumni Association recognized them all as *Alumnus of the Year* and other honors. Female graduates such as Carolyn Kurtz ('86)



*Capt. Dianna Wolfson, USN, ('96) currently serving as the 110th Commander of Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Virginia.*

are leaders in the maritime industry, in her case as a Tampa Bay pilot. Dianna Wolfson ('96) found success as an active-duty naval officer who currently commands the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, the largest naval shipyard in the world. In 2023 the Navy tapped her to become a Rear Admiral.

Small in numbers, USMMA's Jewish community nonetheless persists. As a female graduate notes, "the amount of support we have received is truly amazing." That support comes from families, faculty and staff, alumni, the Jewish community lying just beyond Vickery Gate, and of course from midship-

men helping one another. Since 2018 midshipmen have increasingly looked to the local Jewish community for support, especially to Rabbi Yamin Levy of the Beth Hadassah Synagogue and his congregation. So too, the Midshipman Jewish Club has ensured that Jewish students have a voice on campus and a cadre of upperclassmen who advise and advocate for incoming Plebes. With the continued support of Long Island's Jewish community, there is every reason to think that USMMA's community of Jewish midshipmen, faculty, staff, and alumni will continue to excel and produce strong leaders for the twenty-first century.



# AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MUSEUM

The American Merchant Marine Museum at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy collects, preserves, interprets, and displays heritage assets such as historical artifacts, records, documents, and art relevant to the post-1900 American maritime industry. The Museum educates midshipmen and the public regarding the Merchant Marine's contributions to our nation's heritage in both peace and war.

American Merchant Marine Museum  
U.S. Merchant Marine Academy  
300 Steamboat Road  
Kings Point, NY 11024

Email: [museum@usmma.edu](mailto:museum@usmma.edu)  
Business Hours: 10:00am-3:00pm, Tuesday-Friday  
Closed during Academy vacations



AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE MUSEUM