



61 JEWS DIED AS A RESULT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

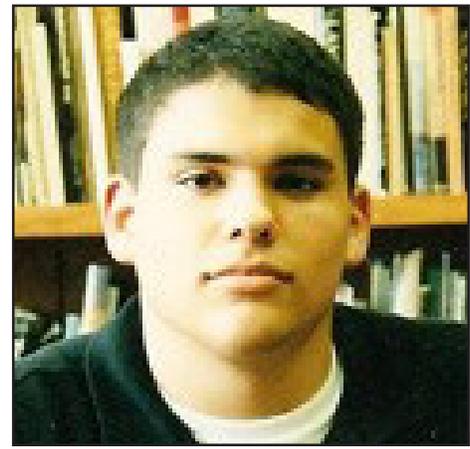


CPL. MARK A. EVNIN 'PROUD IN A UNIFORM'

Mark Evinin could always be found wearing some kind of uniform. Long before he enlisted in the Marine Corps as a senior in high school, Evinin regularly donned fireman, Superman and Ghostbusters costumes. His mother, Mindy Evinin, described him as friendly, loving and always willing to lend a helping hand. He enjoyed playing sports, especially lacrosse, and had an affinity for working with computers. After the military he planned to pursue a career in computer imaging, his mother said, adding that he was so charming, "if nothing else, he would be great in sales."

In his eulogy, Evinin's grandfather, Rabbi Max Wall of Ohavi Zedek Synagogue in the family's hometown of Burlington, Vt., said: "[Mark] was a tall, straight, proud human being. When he finally got permission to put on a uniform of the Marine Corps, it was the most wonderful thing in his life."

Mark Evinin was killed April 3, 2003, after sustaining two machine gun bullet wounds during crossfire in Iraq. He was 21 years old.



SPC. JEFFREY M. WERSHOW 'HISTORY LOVER'

Attending law school and running for president of the United States were Jeffrey Wershow's plans after finishing his time in the National Guard. He consumed history books, particularly those about the Vietnam War, and developed an interest in politics, even working in the election offices of local politicians in Gainesville, Fla.

After spending three years in the Army Reserve, Wershow attended Santa Fe Community College, in New Mexico, prior to enlisting in the National Guard. His father, Jonathan Wershow, said that before being deployed to Iraq, his son attended Sabbath services near Fort Stewart in Georgia and would later celebrate Passover in the desert in Iraq.

His father maintains that "the military was very good for Jeffrey. He really grew up; [the military] really helped him a lot. If my son had to die, he felt that he was giving his life for a cause worth dying for."

Jeffrey Wershow was killed July 6, 2003, when he was shot in Baghdad during military operations. He was 22 years old.



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1ST LT. DAVID R. BERNSTEIN 'SILVER STAR'

A valedictorian at his Philadelphia high school, David Bernstein was ranked fifth in his class at the United States Military Academy. A member of the swim team at West Point, Bernstein excelled in athletics and enjoyed running, bicycling and taking part in triathlons. "What he wanted was to do something for his country," his father, Richard Bernstein, told Associated Press reporters.

According to the website Military Times, Bernstein was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for risking his life under extreme enemy fire in an effort to rescue one of his soldiers. "Although suffering from a mortar wound, Bernstein extracted the driver to safety, directed the security of his objective, and repulsed the enemy forces before succumbing to his wounds," Military Times stated.

David Bernstein was killed October 18, 2003, in Taza, Iraq. He was 24 years old.



PFC. JACOB S. FLETCHER 'COURAGE AND COMPASSION'

When Jacob Fletcher was 8 years old, he filled out an advertisement in a magazine to enlist in the Army. When he was not successful the first time, he tried again. "I had recruiters calling my house, asking for Private Fletcher," recalled Dorine Kenney, Fletcher's mother. "He always gave me a run for my money."

An only child with a tremendous sense of humor, Fletcher was an athlete in high school in Bay Shore, N.Y., joining the varsity wrestling team and playing lacrosse. But after graduation, he decided that college was not right for him. The terror attacks in 2001 had a profound effect on Fletcher and led to his enlistment when he was 27 years old. "Being that I got the first call when he was 8 years old, I wasn't very surprised when he joined," Kenney told the Forward.

Raised with a spiritual outlook on life, Fletcher embraced his Jewish heritage and tattooed a large, blue Star of David on his shoulder when he was 20.

In one of his many letters home, Fletcher wrote about Iraqi children who had been burned, saying that it broke his heart seeing them, knowing he would die for the Iraqi people.

In another letter, he asked his mother to mail letters and a care package to one of his friends who did not receive any support from home. What started with one package has turned into a tradition that Kenney continued after her son's death, with the establishment of Jacob's Light Foundation. To date, the organization has sent more than 400,000 pounds worth of care packages to troops in all branches of the military.

"Jacob's headstone reads his name, his rank, courage and compassion. In his lifetime, he learned about courage and he certainly learned about compassion," his mother said.

Jacob Fletcher was killed in Samara, Iraq, on November 13, 2003, when a makeshift bomb struck a bus on which he was a passenger. He was 28 years old.

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SPC. MARC S. SEIDEN 'WILD STREAK, SWEET SIDE'

Marc Seiden was so imaginative that when he was 9 years old, he built a two-story house for the family cat in the backyard and dubbed it the Cat Condo.

Coming from a Reform Jewish home, the Brigantine, N.J., native had a bar mitzvah, attended Hebrew school and later chose to declare his religion in the military. Athletic and good with his hands, Seiden also loved animals.

His mother, Gail Seiden, recalled her son's sweet side — and his wild streak. "Marc rode his bike without checking the road for oncoming traffic; he drove a car without a license and had no sense of fear. But he would also come off the baseball field and walk over just to give me a hug and a kiss.... He was a macho boy, but deep down he was so sweet," she told the Forward.

When a family friend died in the 2001 terror attacks, Seiden took the loss very hard and made the decision to enlist in the Army. "When he went in he was almost 25, and it came as a shock.... We begged him not to do it, because we knew what the dangers were," his mother said.

In November 2003, President Bush made a surprise visit to Seiden's camp for Thanksgiving. "We turned on the TV... there was a speech going on, and I saw him standing on a line," Gail Seiden said. "And that was the last time I saw my son alive."

His brother's first child was born the day Seiden would have returned.

Marc Seiden was killed on January 2, 2004, during an ambush in Baghdad, three weeks before he was due to come home. He was 26 years old.



2ND LT. SETH J. DVORIN 'LEAVING HIS LOVE'

To know Seth Dvorin was to love him. An introvert who was not athletic, Dvorin grew to enjoy team sports because he liked to be with people. When he was not challenged, Dvorin was easily bored and had a mischievous streak. "He was my short little roly-poly with big red cheeks," Dvorin's mother, Sue Niederer, told the Forward. He went to Hebrew school, had his bar mitzvah and was proud of being Jewish.

Dvorin graduated from Rutgers University in 2002 and enlisted in the army to ease the financial burden of college loans on his mother. With his eyes set on working for the FBI or the CIA in the future, Dvorin believed that military service would look good on his résumé.

Fresh from boot camp, Dvorin was shocked when he was told that he would be deployed to Iraq, because he had never commanded a unit. "They told him, 'We will give you on-the-job training.' They did. They killed him," Niederer said.

Dvorin's father, Richard Dvorin, remembers the day he found out his son was killed as the worst day of his life. "I've truly missed my son," he told the Forward. "I've cried over him every day since, and I will continue to cry over him until I join him."

Dvorin married his college sweetheart, Kelly Harris, a week before he left for Iraq in the fall of 2003.

Seth Dvorin was killed February 3, 2004, trying to dismantle a makeshift bomb near Iskandariyah, Iraq, where dozens of troops had been killed. He was the only soldier killed in the blast. He was 24 years old.



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SGT. ELIJAH TAI WAH WONG 'FROM IDF TO U.S. ARMY'

Elijah Tai Wah Wong came from a poor family on New York City's Lower East Side projects. His father was of Chinese descent, but Wong and his siblings were raised with Modern Orthodox Jewish values through their Jewish mother. Wong is remembered by his sister as an outgoing, funny and mischievous child who attended grade school at Yeshiva Rabbi Jacob Konvitz and from there went on to Israel to finish high school on a kibbutz. After graduation, Wong joined the Israel Defense Forces and served in the Golani corps.

Returning from Israel, Wong enlisted in the Air Force, married his wife, Lizeth, and became a father of three children. "Eli didn't wait for someone to say to do something, he just went ahead and did it. He was always positive and a bit sarcastic at times.... He always saw the good side of everything and always tried to make people laugh," his wife told the Forward.

Wong is remembered as someone who would always learn jokes just to make people laugh. He was also a talented artist, even though he did not spend a lot of time drawing as an adult. "Eli was the kind of person who tried to save the world one person at a time and truly believed he could.... Eli believed that humanity is good and ultimately good will prevail," his sister wrote the Forward.

Elijah Tai Wah Wong was killed February 9, 2004, in Iraq, while defusing a bomb. He was 42 years old.



PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS NATHAN B. BRUCKENTHAL 'SENSE OF PURPOSE'

Nathan Bruckenthal was a fun-loving child. "He was all good things, everything every father would love," recalled his father, Eric Bruckenthal. His parents separated when Bruckenthal was 6 years old and then respectively remarried, but the two families remained close.

Bruckenthal grew up in Stony Brook, N.Y., in a home where a sense of purpose was drilled into him. His father has been on the police force for 35 years, and his stepfather was in the Army. So when Bruckenthal approached his father about enlisting in the Coast Guard, Eric Bruckenthal was not surprised. Later, after joining the specialized Tactical Law Enforcement Team, Bruckenthal was deployed to Iraq.

He had just found out that his wife was three months pregnant with their first child when he was killed. That child, a daughter, recently turned 6 years old.

As the only Coast Guard officer to be killed in action since the Vietnam War, Bruckenthal left a legacy that has been embraced by the Coast Guard, which has invited his father to speak at its events. "Though I lost a son, I gained 40,000 surrogate sons and daughters in the Coast Guard," his father said.

Though Bruckenthal did not have a bar mitzvah, he began identifying with Judaism toward the end of his life and decided that when he returned home, he would become a bar mitzvah. "He was laid in his coffin, draped in a tallis and the Star of David. For our family, he received his last rites as a Jewish man," his father said.

Nathan Bruckenthal was killed April 24, 2004, in a suicide attack in the Northern Persian Gulf. He was 24 years old.



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CPL. DUSTIN H. SCHRAGE 'COMEDIAN WITH CONFIDENCE'

Dustin Schrage was so funny, he could have been a standup comic, his mother told The Associated Press. Schrage, a native of Indian Harbour Beach, Fla., loved to play video games and listen to punk rock music, and was always making everyone laugh. "He was the comedian of the family. He was a ham. He was very well respected and well liked," Nina Schrage said, describing her son.

"Dustin always seems to be able to squeeze a laugh out of his teachers and his parents," Rabbi Zvi Konikov told AP reporters. "His laughter and confidence made him a leader."

Schrage joined the Marines after graduating from Satellite High School, a step toward his ultimate career goal of becoming a police SWAT member. According to reports, after boot camp, Schrage's first day as a Marine was September 11, 2001.

Dustin Schrage's body was found May 6, 2004, after the soldier disappeared with his team May 3 while swimming across the Euphrates River in the Al Anbar province. Another Marine drowned during the same mission. Schrage was 20 years old.



SGT. ALAN D. SHERMAN 'HONORABLE NAME'

Alan Sherman is most remembered for being a loving and devoted father. A Marine reservist who worked as a licensed practical nurse when he was not on duty, Sherman spent most of his time with his two sons, Joshua and Logan.

Sherman lived with his parents in the Wanamassa section of Ocean Township, N.J. His ex-wife, Dolores Sherman, told The Associated Press that the two had maintained a close friendship and kept in regular contact even while he was away. Sherman adored his children, spending as much time with them as he could.

Michael Sherman said his brother had "left [his children] his honorable name, as a hero and as a loving father."

"He wanted to come home to his boys. But he knew he was doing the right thing. He wanted to fight for his boys so they wouldn't have to do it," Dolores Sherman said. "He totally believed in what he was doing."

Alan Sherman was killed June 29, 2004, by a roadside bomb in Baghdad. He was 36 years old.

The Veterans Administration (VA) offers Veterans Choice Program

It stipulates that Veterans who have to wait more than 30 days to see a doctor, or who live more than 40 miles from their closest VA site can receive health care from community providers. The provider must be part of the VA's network of community providers. Please go to the following website for further information:

<https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/choice-act-summary.pdf>





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LANCE CPL. MARK E. ENGEL 'VALIANT FIGHTER'

A native of Centennial, Colo., Mark Engel died in a Texas hospital the day before his 22nd birthday. According to Associated Press reports, a battle in Al Anbar province left Engel, a Marine, with burns on more than 70% of his body, as well as with lung damage and kidney failure. "He fought a valiant fight for two weeks," his father, Bill Engel, told Denver's KUSA-TV.

Engel loved playing football and rugby and enjoyed skiing and snowboarding; his sister Dana told KUSA. Engel joined the Marines after graduating from high school in 2001 and was in boot camp September 11 of that year. He was on his second tour in Iraq.

Mark Engel died July 21, 2004. He was 21 years old.

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CAPT. MICHAEL Y. TARLAVSKY 'RELIGIOUS REFUGEE'

Born in Latvia when it was still part of the Soviet Union, Michael Tarlavsky was 5 years old in 1979, when his family immigrated to the United States as religious refugees. He was placed with a sponsor family in the New Orleans Jewish community. The family later moved to Clifton, N.J.

Sociable and friendly, Tarlavsky was popular and athletic in high school and studied sports medicine at Rutgers University. An adventurer, Tarlavsky was a scuba diving master, went skydiving and loved to travel on a whim. "He lived 90 years in his 30," his sister, Elina Tarlavsky, told the Forward. Always knowing that he was going to be in the military, Tarlavsky joined the ROTC in college.

When he was deployed to Korea's demilitarized zone, he had a chance to meet Benjamin Netanyahu and give him a tour of the area. Later, because Tarlavsky spoke Russian, he became valuable in Afghanistan and spent a great deal of time meeting tribal leaders and establishing relationships.

After his first tour, Tarlavsky married his fiancé, Tricia, an Army captain who shared his love of adventure and the outdoors. He also had a chance to deliver his son, Joseph Michael, and was in Tennessee for the first nine months of his son's life before he was sent to Iraq. Tarlavsky was killed only a month into his deployment.

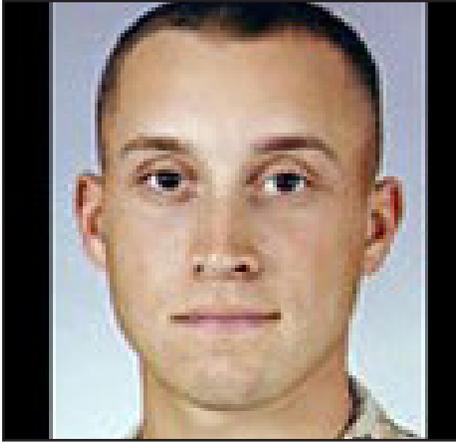
The night before he was killed, Elina received an instant message from her brother, wishing her a happy birthday.

"When we would fight as children, my father always told us, 'When your mother and I are gone, you'll only have each other,' and not having that now is probably the hardest thing," Elina said.

Michael Tarlavsky was killed August 12, 2004, when his unit was attacked in Najaf, Iraq. He was 30 years old.



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1ST LT. ANDREW K. STERN 'A GOOD SON'

A graduate of the Culver Military Academy in Indiana and then the University of Tennessee, Stern had always wanted to be a Marine. A native of the Chicago area, and later Germantown, Tenn., Stern was friendly and fun loving, doting on his three younger brothers. "He became as good a son as there could be. He became my best friend," Richard Stern said of his eldest son.

Eileen Stern awoke at 4 a.m. on Rosh Hashanah and thought of her son in Iraq. The next morning, two Marines approached her and her husband to tell them Andrew Stern had been killed, a month before he was due to return. "He woke me up to say goodbye," she said, according to an obituary for Stern.

Andrew Stern was killed September 16, 2004, in the Al Anbar province in Iraq. He was 24 years old.



SGT. FOSTER L. HARRINGTON 'DEDICATED FIREFIGHTER'

When Foster Harrington was killed in action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, the Marine Corps had no means of contacting his family; instead, they contacted the Seven Hills fire chief, Paul Newton, in Mobile, Ala., where Harrington had been a volunteer firefighter and where his Marine Corps unit had been stationed. "He was part of our fire family... We were so close, he became part of my family," Newton said.

A native of New York by way of Fort Worth, Texas, Harrington was a private man who rarely spoke about his family or religion, but his Southern manners and perpetual smile made him endearing to all he met. "I close my eyes and I can see his face, his hair, his smile... every day I see that," Newton said.

Newton and his wife, Sheila, have set up a shadow box displaying Harrington's Purple Heart and the American flag that once draped his coffin. "[Harrington's] number was 743 [at the fire station]. That number was retired, and it will never be used in our organization ever again," Sheila Newton said. Harrington's fire helmet holds a permanent place by her husband's desk at the fire station.

Before Harrington was deployed to Iraq, the Newtons and the firehouse threw a party for the unit, but now, after Harrington, "we don't do send-offs anymore, we only do 'Welcome home,'" Sheila Newton said.

Foster Harrington was killed September 20, 2004, by enemy action in the Al Anbar province. He was 31 years old.

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This QR Code leads you directly to the online Jwv National Membership Application.

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CORPORAL MICHAEL R. COHEN

'HUMOR AND HEART'

Growing up, if there was an underdog to fight for, Michael Cohen made sure he was the one to do it. A happy and humorous child, Cohen enjoyed Sunday school, was an avid lover of science fiction and embraced new ideas.

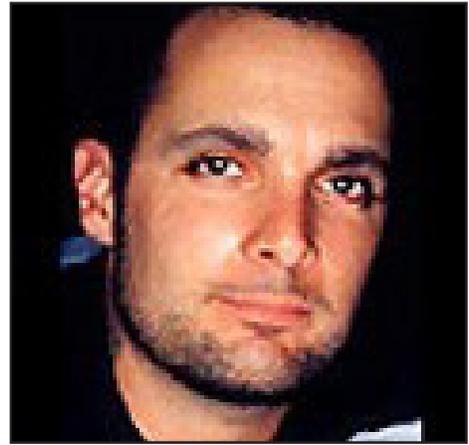
A native of Jacobus, Pa., Cohen was a middle child with two sisters who teased and loved him fiercely. He had a close relationship with his father, David Cohen, a doctor, and mother, Agnes Cohen, a nurse.

Cohen's mother remembers striking a deal with her teenage son to deter him from misbehaving: If Cohen went six weeks without getting into trouble, he could do anything he wanted. To her surprise, the only thing her son wanted was to get a mohawk. "Once, he walked into the house when I was entertaining a house full of ladies. He just stood there, grinning away at their reactions to his hair. It was so funny, I was laughing, too," Agnes Cohen recalled.

To the surprise of his parents, Cohen decided to enlist in the military when he was 19 years old and studying at the York Technical Institute. Having made up his mind, Cohen arranged for several recruiters to come to the house to speak to his family. "When I saw a Marine walk into my home, I knew that's what Michael was going to do...he wanted to do something not everybody could do," Agnes Cohen said. Cohen told his family that after the military, he'd like to be a teacher or a nurse.

"He had a soft spot for anyone that needed [someone], including me," his mother said. When Cohen's younger sister had a baby boy, she named him Ryan Michael "because it would have been too hard to hear Michael's name every day."

Michael Cohen was killed November 22, 2004, by enemy action in Fallujah, Iraq. He was 23 years old.



PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS JOHN D. HOUSE 'DEVOTED FATHER'

John House heard his son's first cries over a satellite phone, and a few days later he saw his son, James, for the first time, on videotape. "I just can't believe that's our baby," Melanie House remembers her husband saying as he wiped his eyes.

The Ventura, Calif., native had tattoos, rode motorcycles and, according to reports, gave his son the middle name Cash, after Johnny Cash. House joined the military because he wanted a stable career as a Navy medic.

According to The Associated Press, before leaving on his tour, House slept with a stuffed toy for two weeks so that James would know his scent when he returned home to his family. He also made a recording of himself reading "Goodnight Moon." House never had a chance to meet his son.

John House was killed January 26, 2005, when the helicopter carrying him and 30 Marines crashed in a sandstorm near Rutbah, Iraq. He was 28 years old.





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SPC. DANIEL J. FREEMAN 'DOING THE RIGHT THING'

Daniel Freeman was always the boy with the Israeli accent, a remnant of his life on a kibbutz, where he lived until he was 9 years old.

Growing up in Cincinnati, he loved playing soccer and rock climbing, and was part of the local fire department's explorer club, excited to dress up and train like a firefighter. As an older teenager, "Daniel developed a keen sense of right and wrong and would get very upset if he thought something was unfair," said Shmuel Birkan, Freeman's stepfather.

In high school, Freeman took an enthusiastic interest in military history, a subject he studied in addition to Hebrew. He decided he wanted to enlist in the Army, "because he truly believed it was the right thing to do," Birkan said. A participant in the Army's early induction program, Freeman went on to complete his basic and advanced training in Fort Benning, Ga.

"Daniel was never particularly in favor of [America's] reason for being in Iraq and Afghanistan. He just knew that his mission was to keep himself and his friends safe," Birkan said.

Freeman had been in Afghanistan for about two months when he was killed in a helicopter crash April 6, 2005, along with 15 other soldiers. He was not scheduled to be on board the supply flight to Kandahar but had volunteered for a friend. He was 20 years old.



SGT. STEVEN M. BUDEYSKY 'FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE'

Steven Budeysky was born in Moldova in the former Soviet Union and went on to learn English as part of a singing group that toured Europe. When Budeysky was 12 years old, he and his family immigrated to the United States, settling in Chicago, where he attended Ida Crown Jewish Academy. He was also known as Baruch or Boris to his friends.

A 2001 graduate of Northwestern University with a degree in economics and history, Budeysky was pursuing a graduate degree in political science from Troy University when he enlisted in the Army in 2002.

A member of the 105th Military Intelligence Battalion, Budeysky was regarded as a subject matter expert and gave translation assistance because of his fluency in Russian. He volunteered for a six-month deployment to Iraq in April 2005 as part of a joint national intelligence support team and was killed one month later.

Steven Budeysky was killed May 19, 2005, in Iraq. The circumstances behind his death have not been revealed. He was 27 years old.



- Sole surviving sons are exempt from the military draft. This is because the Sullivan Brothers, five real brothers, were killed when the USS Juneau was sunk by a Japanese torpedo in World War II.

- The ball at the top of the base flagpole is known as a "truck". It is the only "truck" on a military installation as what we call "trucks" are technically "vehicles."

- The Army and Marine Corps have instrument repair technicians - these troops repair musical instruments for the military bands.

- Navy ships named USS Arizona and USS Oklahoma will return to active duty with the announcement that two new Virginia-class attack submarines will be named after American heroes of the greatest generation who perished on the famed Pearl Harbor battleships.



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SGT. HOWARD P. ALLEN 'DEDICATED FRIEND'

Howard Allen thought Iraq was “hell.” AZ Central reports say the Mesa, Ariz., native maintained contact with friends and family back home through his LiveJournal blog. “You feel that bomb go off in your dreams, but it’s not your buddy this time but you,” Allen wrote in one of the entries.

“The main thing I want people to know is that the men and women he served with were everything,” Allen’s wife, Patience, 31, told reporters. “He volunteered for missions so his friends’ lives would not be put on the line.” Allen was a father of one and a stepfather of two.

Howard Allen was killed September 26, 2005, in Baghdad when his vehicle was struck by a makeshift bomb. He was 31 years old.



SPC. BENYAHMIN B. YAHUDAH 'A CARING MEDIC'

For Benyahmin Yahudah, growing up in the country meant more space for his adventures and experiments. He even attempted to dig a hole for an underground laboratory in his backyard.

Born to a black Israelite family in Madison County, Ga., Yahudah and his five siblings were home schooled because they did not live in a Jewish community. After achieving a perfect score on the high school diploma exam, Yahudah started classes at Athens Technical College when he was only 15 years old.

One of his sisters, Shoshanah Bat Yahudah, remembers her brother as a computer whiz who hacked into a government computer system, getting the attention of the military. “The Marines, Air Force and Army recruiters saw him as an asset and kept coming to the house, trying to recruit him,” she said. Yahudah enlisted in the Army and became a combat medic, a career path he wanted to pursue after the service.

Yahudah was stationed in Iraq and spoke to his family regularly, telling them that the reality in Iraq was not what Americans saw on TV, that the Iraqi people were friendly to him.

“THE JEWISH VETERAN”

Here is a link for the current issue – it is formatted as a PDF. Please feel free to email the link to a member of our faith who might be a potential JWV member. Also, ask you Shul/Temple/Synagogue/JCC to post a copy of “The Jewish Veteran” on their bulletin board. It serves as an ideal way to market the JWV USA and what we represent.

<https://www.jwv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Jewish-Veteran-2019-Issue-4.pdf>

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The Jewish Veteran

A Jewish Voice for Veterans and a Veteran's Voice for Jews

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SPOTLIGHT



AIRMAN 1ST CLASS ELIZABETH N. JACOBSON 'CARRYING A SMILE'

The only thing Elizabeth Jacobson did not like about serving in Iraq was the sand. A published poet with a perpetual smile on her face, Jacobson was outspoken and determined, and planned on embarking on a career in law when she returned home from Iraq. After her parents' divorce, Jacobson moved in with her paternal grandparents in Riviera Beach, Fla., where she lived for three years while maintaining a very close relationship with her family. "She was a typical teenager, sometimes obstinate... but I remember her always smiling," said Sondra Millman, Jacobson's grandmother. Jacobson wanted a career in criminal justice and decided to enlist in the armed services like her father and grandfather, who had both served in the Navy. "I drove her to the Air Force recruiting station myself," Millman said.

Though not observant, Jacobson decided to declare her religion out of respect for her Orthodox father, David Jacobson.

Jacobson was deployed to Iraq two years after enlistment, and "loved serving with people who had become her family," Millman said. She had been in Iraq for only three months when she became the first female airman killed in the line of duty there.

Jacobson left her friends and family with these last words on her MySpace page that they have since embraced: "We're only on earth for a little while, so live life to the fullest and carry a smile." Her family had a special reason to smile three years ago, when Jacobson's little sister Chana was born on her birthday. "A little miracle," Millman said.

Elizabeth Jacobson was killed September 28, 2005, when her vehicle made contact with an improvised explosive device near Safwan at the Iraq and Kuwait border. She was 21 years old.



PFC. COLIN J. WOLFE 'DANCING SOLDIER'

Colin Wolfe decided he wanted to be a Marine when a group of marines visited his elementary school. The son of an owner of a dance company, Wolfe began dancing ballet when he was only 2 years old. An athlete who enjoyed baseball and track, his mother remembers recruiting Wolfe's friends for "The Nutcracker" at baseball games.

Born in an interfaith home in Manassas, Va., Wolfe and his sister, Cecile, were both raised Jewish. He attended Sunday school and had Sabbath dinner every Friday with his family.

On a trip to Normandy to celebrate Wolfe's high school graduation, the family visited the American cemetery at Omaha Beach. Amy Wolfe remembers her son walking across the cemetery, looking at the graves marked by the Star of David.

"The attacks on 9/11 solidified the decision for him; it was like a lightning bolt moment," Amy Wolfe told the Forward. "Colin heard stories of older generations who served in World War II... He wanted to do for others what had been done in the past for Jews."

A lover of woodwork, Wolfe once made his mother a pen-and-paper holder, which she had put away. A year after his death, Amy Wolfe found her son's handiwork while cleaning, and turned it over to find "Hi, mom" written on the green felt.

Colin Wolfe was killed August 30, 2006, during combat operations in the Al Anbar province in Iraq. He was buried on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, in Arlington National Cemetery. He was 19 years old.



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CAPT. ROBERT M. SECHER 'SMILING SOLDIER'

Robert Secher was dubbed the “smiling soldier” because he was smiling in every photograph he sent from Iraq.

Secher liked to think of his career “as a ‘calling,’ much like some are called to the rabbinate or priesthood,” his sister, Josie Ballin, told The Commercial Appeal. A native of Germantown, Tenn., Secher attended Christian Brothers High School and moved on to graduate from Alabama’s Marion Military Institute. He joined the Marine Corps when he was 17 years old.

Secher’s father, H. Pierre Secher, told reporters that he used to imagine having two Marines tell him of his son’s death, “Because I said to myself, ‘If I think of it, it won’t happen.’” But it did. The family found out about their son’s death after a meeting at their synagogue.

Robert Secher was killed October 8, 2006, during operations in Al Anbar province in Iraq. He was 33 years old.



1ST LT. NATHAN M. KRISOFF 'THE LONG SILENCE OF FRIENDS'

Nathan Krissoff enjoyed being outdoors, especially if it involved water sports. Krissoff and his brother, Austin, were experts in wild water kayak racing, The Associated Press reported. A native of Reno, Nev., Krissoff was known for his sense of humor and was captain of his high school water polo team. He was a 1993 graduate of Williams College, where he studied political science.

“When we depart these lands, when we deploy home, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the long silence of our friends,” Lt. Col. William Seely, the battalion commander, said at Krissoff’s memorial service. “Nathan, your love, your brotherhood, your memory, like the flash in the horizon at sunset and sunrise, will be endless. Your silence will be deafening.”

Nathan Krissoff was killed December 9, 2006, during combat operations in the Al Anbar province, Iraq. He was 25 years old.

A COUPLE OF IMPORTANT NOTES

On January 1, 2020, the Blue Water Navy (BWN) Act of 2019 went into effect and extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to BWN Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam and have since developed one of 14 conditions related to exposure. For additional information please go to the following site: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/69370/blue-water-navy-veterans-disability-claims-nowdecided/>

Disabled Veterans are eligible for free National Park Service Pass Veterans with a service connected disability rating are entering Federal recreation lands and national parks for free with an America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands lifetime Access Pass through an interagency partnership between the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation. For additional information please go to the following site: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/60590/disabled-veterans-eligible-free-national-park-service-lifetime-access-pass/>

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SPOTLIGHT



PFC. DANIEL J. AGAMI THE 'HEBREW HAMMER'

A native of Cleveland, Daniel Agami and his family moved to Coral Springs, Fla., when Agami was 5 years old. His parents, Beth and Itzhak Agami, worked four jobs between them just to afford a Jewish education for Agami and his younger brother, Ilan, at the Hebrew Academy Community School.

An extrovert who was always on the move, Agami was a natural-born athlete who swiftly picked up on and excelled in new sports. He began showing an interest in bodybuilding when he was 13 years old. His mother remembers him placing fourth in a skiing contest the first time he ever skied; the resort even offered him a job as a ski instructor.

Four years after 9/11, Agami decided to enlist in the Army. Grandson of a Korean War veteran and son of an Israeli army veteran, Agami always had a strong sense of patriotism and was off to basic training in September 2005. His family supported his decision.

Agami flew an Israeli flag over his bunk in Schweinfurt, Germany, his home base, and then in Iraq. His rifle had "Hebrew Hammer" written across it, and his friends called him the GI Jew.

Beth Agami remembers her son as a man with a lot of energy who could never sit still. "[He was] always on the move and had to meet everyone he encountered and visit every possible place if he had the opportunity. Now we understand why," his mother wrote in an e-mail to the Forward. "He lived a short life but filled it up with more than most people do in a lifetime."

Agami's younger brother was married 11 days before his brother was killed. He went on to name his son Daniel.

Daniel Agami was killed June 21, 2007, by an improvised explosive device in Adhamiya, Iraq. He was 25 years old.



CPL. ALBERT BITTON 'MEDICINE IN HIS FUTURE'

Albert Bitton married his yeshiva sweetheart a few months before he was deployed to Iraq, where he served as a medic. "Going and being a medic was something he believed in. It was something that was going to contribute to his future," Tal Kohn, Bitton's friend, told ABC News. Bitton planned on a career in medicine.

A native of Chicago, Bitton joined the Army after graduating from Ida Crown Jewish Academy. A stellar student and wrestler, he met his future wife, Melissa Handleman, at school. "I'm still not used to the fact I'm not going to talk to him. My immediate reflex is to remember these things for the next time he calls," Handleman told ABC reporters.

"He loved his country very much," Elie Bitton, his father, told ABC News.

Speaking with the Forward, Ida Crown dean Rabbi Leonard Matanky said it was unusual for two students from the same Jewish high school to be killed in Iraq, referring to Steven Budeysky, who also attended Ida Crown. "My guess is that the last time that happened was in World War II," he said.

Albert Bitton was killed February 20, 2008, in Baghdad, from wounds suffered when his vehicle hit a makeshift bomb the previous day. He was 20 years old.





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MAJ. STUART A. WOLFER 'BELIEVING IN TIKKUN OLAM'

Stuart Wolfer was passionate about *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, believing he was in this world once and had a responsibility to try everything. And he did.

Growing up on Long Island, Wolfer attended Solomon Schechter Day School and the Long Island School for the Gifted. He went on to graduate from Washington University and to earn a law degree from Loyola Law School Los Angeles. He was also a reserve in the U.S. Army, completing ROTC training in college. When he was deployed, Wolfer was married with three children and living on an 80-acre farm that he had purchased in Idaho.

Wolfer's sister, Beverly Wolfer-Nerenberg, said her brother always differentiated himself wherever he went. During a job interview with Thomson West, now Thomson Reuters, Wolfer took out a piece of paper on which he had written down his priorities in order of importance: God, family, country, duty, friendship and self. He was immediately offered the position.

Wolfer-Nerenberg said her brother went to a synagogue wherever he was, wrapped tefillin every day and prayed, and was slated to be the next lay leader at what the soldiers called B'nei Baghdad. Wolfer also invited non-Jews for Sabbath meals, because he wanted to educate people and have them experience Judaism to help break down the barriers.

Following Wolfer's death, his family established an organization that sends care packages to troops. "We adopted the dandelion as our logo because the seeds blow and you never know where they're going to land, and here we never know who the packages go to," Wolfer-Nerenberg said. "We just feel honored that we can continue Stuart's memory."

Stuart Wolfer was killed April 6, 2008, when his unit was attacked by insurgents in Baghdad. He was 36 years old.



MAJ. MARK E. ROSENBERG 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE'

Mark Rosenberg and his sister, Lori Sousa, were married within a day of each other in 1999. "I got married at the Sheraton... and he got married at the Hilton across the street the following day," Sousa told Miami Herald reporters. "It was a lot of fun."

Rosenberg grew up in Miramar and North Miami-Dade, Fla., and while attending the New Mexico Military Institute, he met his future wife, Julie. Following in his father's footsteps, Rosenberg enlisted in the Army in 1996 and lived with his wife and two sons in Fountain, Colo. An extrovert and an athlete, Rosenberg loved scuba diving and spending time with his family.

According to the Miami Herald, Rosenberg was part of an intelligence tactical team that offered training to Iraqis. "He felt this was a humanitarian thing we needed to do. This time, he felt he was really making a difference," Sousa told reporters.

Mark Rosenberg was killed April 8, 2008, in Baghdad when his vehicle was struck by a makeshift bomb. He was 32 years old.





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SENIOR AIRMAN JONATHAN A.V. YELNER 'CHOOSING JUDAISM'

One of Bruce Yelner's favorite memories of his son was the time they spent jogging together. Jonathan Yelner was always intense. A martial arts aficionado, Yelner kept himself in good shape and played lacrosse in high school. "Jonathan was always very dedicated to everything he set his mind to," his father said.

Growing up in an interfaith home with a Catholic mother of Puerto Rican descent, Yelner attended Catholic-run private schools in his hometown of Lafayette, Calif. "We always gave him a choice to find out about other religions and choose. He chose Judaism," his father said.

Yelner visited Israel and requested kosher food while in the military. Because he didn't have a formal Jewish education, he later sought out Jewish chaplains in Afghanistan. Never losing pride in his heritage, Yelner described himself on his MySpace page as a "Puerto Rican Heart Throb."

After graduating high school, Yelner attended some college classes, but he decided that the military was a better option for him. Yelner's father recalls talking to his son as he was making the decision to enlist. "I said: 'I'm not interested in seeing you being thrown into a battle situation. Why don't you consider the Air Force?'" But when the government was looking for service members for a new Provincial Reconstruction Team, Yelner volunteered with gusto. The unit's agenda was to secure areas devastated by Afghani insurgents and help locals restore a community.

Yelner planned on establishing a career in the Air Force and was taking college classes so that he could move up in the ranks to become an officer.

Jonathan Yelner was killed April 29, 2008, in Afghanistan when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device. He was 24 years old.



1ST LT. DANIEL FARKAS 'A DECORATED OFFICER'

Daniel Farkas, a 20-year-veteran of the New York City Police Department and a dedicated athlete, had been a member of the National Guard since 1992. He lived in Brooklyn with his mother, two sisters and two nieces, the New York Daily News reported.

Farkas was honored with the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Armed Forces Reserve Medal and the National Defense Service Medal, among others.

Daniel Farkas was killed July 4, 2008, at Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan. He was 42 years old.



• During World War II, blacksmiths still made many of the items needed to repair equipment and machinery. They would make metal tools and parts, by hand, in coal or coke forges. They also made shoes for some of the tens of thousands of horses and mules that saw service during the war.

• During WWII, the 5332nd Brigade, a long range patrol group created for service in the mountains of Burma, was largely self-sufficient due to the 3,000 mules assigned to it — all shipped from the United States.

• The cryptanalytic organization MI-8, which broke codes for the U.S. State Department and military from WWI until 1929, was also known as "The Black Chamber".

• "HESH" stands for "high-explosive squash head", it doesn't penetrate a tank's armor like a modern Sabot round. Instead, the HESH is a small, high-explosive round that smashes against an enemy tank then explodes, creating a shockwave that is transmitted through the tank's armor, killing the crew inside. It was developed during WWII by the British in response to the German Tiger tank which was extremely difficult for allied tank rounds to penetrate.

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SGT. ROBERT M. WEINGER 'SPORTS AND HUMOR'

Robert Weinger, a native of a Round Lake Beach, Ill., a Chicago suburb, was a sports aficionado. He was a White Sox and Bears fan, played soccer, wrestled in high school and went hunting with his father.

Weinger graduated from Round Lake High School in 2003 and completed Army Basic Training and Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga. He was deployed for his second tour in August 2008 and was part of a unit helping train local police and the Afghan army, according to The Associated Press.

A man who always kept his comrades' morale high, Weinger had a silly side to him. Mary Weinger, his grandmother, told the Arlington Heights Daily Herald that Weinger loved a good practical joke.

"He was also a devoted soldier," she said. "It's just a shame he won't be here anymore."

Robert Weinger was killed March 15, 2009, near Bati Kot, Afghanistan, when his vehicle struck an explosive device. He was 24 years old.



ARMY RESERVE LT. COL. SHAWN M. PINE 'BORN TO SERVE'

Son of a career military man, Shawn Pine grew up moving from Army base to Army base and always knew he would enlist. Pine went to summer school and graduated from high school a year early so that he could go to Israel and join the Israeli army in 1974, where he served for six years. Michelle Lefkowitz, Pine's sister, told the Forward that her brother would have continued to serve had the Israeli army not asked him to give up his American citizenship, something he was not prepared to do.

Pine graduated from Georgetown University and joined the U.S. Army, where he served for about 15 years. During that time he married his girlfriend after she converted to Judaism; together they had three children, settling in San Antonio Texas. A charming man with a stubborn streak, Pine loved to engage in political debates, always playing the role of devil's advocate.

The 2001 terrorist attacks had such a profound effect on Pine that he decided to go back into active duty with MPRI, the security consulting firm he worked with until his death. "We both grew up with the idea that you owe an obligation and loyalty you owe your country.... I knew that Shawn would not have lived with himself if he didn't do something," Lefkowitz told the Forward.

Wherever he was stationed, Pine found people he could help. In Afghanistan, Pine met a little girl who supported her family by selling scarves, and he bought some each week to send home to Lefkowitz. "I got the last box [of scarves] a week after he was killed; it was mailed out the day he died," Lefkowitz said.

Shawn Pine was killed on May 20, 2009, in the same attack that killed 1st Lt. Roslyn L. Schulte when their vehicle struck an explosive device near Kabul, Afghanistan. He is buried next to his father in Arlington National Cemetery. He was 51 years old.



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1ST LT. ROSLYN L. SCHULTE 'RUNNING FOR ROZ'

Roslyn Schulte was a model student who participated in the International Model United Nations in The Hague, a star athlete who played lacrosse in high school and later in the Air Force Academy, and a generous member of her community. A native of St. Louis, Schulte was a 2006 graduate of the Air Force Academy, its first female graduate killed in combat, according to The Denver Post.

Initially, Schulte wanted to fly, but she pursued a degree in military intelligence instead. "She would call me and say, 'Dad, all these guys might fly the planes, but they follow me.' She was a leader," her father, Robert Schulte, told The Denver Post.

Schulte's friends have started Running for Roz, an organization that seeks to raise money for the Roslyn Schulte Memorial at the United States Air Force Academy. The website lists some of the runners' favorite memories of their friend: "We remember she looked beautiful in a mouth guard or an evening gown. We remember that when Roz spoke, you listened. And if you didn't, your arm might be sore soon. And we remember that Roz was our friend. And if Roz could be taken from this earth, then so could we. So we had better make every day worthwhile."

Roslyn Schulte was killed May 20, 2009, near Kabul, Afghanistan, when her vehicle struck an explosive device. She was killed in the same attack as Army Reserve Lt. Col. Shawn M. Pine. She was 25 years old.



PFC. AARON E. FAIRBAIRN 'DEVOTED TO FAMILY AND CARS'

Aaron Fairbairn was born nearly two months premature and had to be fed from a Barbie bottle until he was big enough to move into the regular natal facility. A happy and friendly child, Fairbairn overcame the health problems he faced as a baby and became fiercely devoted to his family. He showed a dedication to hard work at an early age, quitting sports in the seventh grade to work four different newspaper routes to buy his first car by the time he was 14 years old. His family told the Forward there was nothing Fairbairn enjoyed more than working on his cars. He owned seven trucks by the time he was 20.

Born Aaron Eli Ben-Neth, Fairbairn took his mother's surname when he was 18 years old. Grandson and son of Vietnam War veterans, Fairbairn decided early on he wanted to enlist and establish a career for himself in the army.

Always a slight man, Fairbairn was only 115 pounds when he went into the army and worked incredibly hard to reach 145 pounds. Fairbairn was so proud that he was serving that he wore his uniform around town in Aberdeen, Wash., when he was home on leave.

When news of a kidnapped soldier in Afghanistan coincided with no communication from her son for a week, Shelly Fairbairn told the Forward she envisioned the worst-case scenario. "But then he called [and] we breathed a sigh of relief...the next morning when the soldiers showed up at my door I thought maybe they were here because it's Fourth of July... [I thought,] it can't be, we just spoke to him yesterday."

Aaron Fairbairn was killed on July 4, 2009, when insurgents attacked his base in eastern Afghanistan. He was 20 years old.



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CAPT. BENJAMIN A. SKLAVER 'WATER FOR LIFE'

"He was a young man who had everything and was protective of those who could not help themselves," Gary Sklaver said of his son, Benjamin Sklaver. "He left a smile on everyone's face when he walked into a room."

A native of Hamden, Conn., Sklaver spent a semester in Israel as part of the Eisendrath International Exchange High School program, coming back conversant in Hebrew. Captain of his high school swim team, member of the theater program and active in his temple youth group, Sklaver developed a keen interest in world politics and history. He was also heavily influenced by Reform Judaism's emphasis on social action.

Sklaver earned a bachelor's degree at Tufts University and later his graduate degree at the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University. At Fletcher, Sklaver wrote his thesis on how the military may be suited for humanitarian projects that deliver food and medicine to those in need. While working toward his degree, Sklaver joined the army reserves, a move that came as a surprise to his parents but was consistent with everything that was important to him, Gary Sklaver told the Forward.

Sklaver was working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after graduation when he was activated and deployed to northern Uganda to work on securing an area recovering from a 20-year civil war. The locals called Sklaver "Moses Ben" because of his dedication bringing clean water to impoverished communities. When he returned from Uganda, he formed ClearWater Initiative, a non-profit organization that continues to help communities in Uganda.

Engaged to be married, Sklaver was working for FEMA when he was reactivated for another year of service and set to deploy to Iraq. But when the United States shifted its focus, Sklaver was sent to Afghanistan instead. His wedding was set for his return.

Benjamin Sklaver was killed on October 2, 2009, in Murcheh, Afghanistan when his Civil Affairs unit was attacked by a suicide bomber. He was 32 years old.



LANCE CPL. JEREMY M. KANE 'BORN TO MILITARY LIFE'

From a young age, Jeremy Kane showed an interest in the military. Born on a military base because the Army was paying for his father's medical school, Kane always saw his father go off to work in a uniform every day. To him, military life was natural.

Settling in Cherry Hill, N.J., Melinda Kane remembers people being drawn to her son; all of his friends considered him their best friend. Very quiet and not athletic, Kane transformed himself when he took an interest in running, lifting weights and fencing. Kane was also an avid reader and lover of classical music.

When Kane decided he wanted to join the Marines, his parents were against it. "I told him I would have felt different if he had decided to join the Israeli army.... Jeremy said that we were all fighting the same war," his mother told the Forward. Kane enlisted on September 11, during his freshman year of college and, knowing how angry they would be, it took him three weeks to tell his parents.

At his father's funeral before his deployment, Kane said that the most important thing he learned from his father was to do the right thing, even when no one was looking. That is how he lived his life.

Jeremy Kane was killed on January 23, 2010, while supporting combat operations in Helmand Province in Afghanistan. He was 22 years old.



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LT. MIROSLAV ZILBERMAN 'HERO FOR HIS NEW COUNTRY'

Miroslav Zilberman, a Navy pilot known to his friends as Steven, moved with his parents from Ukraine to Columbus, Ohio, in the early 1990s. His parents, Anna and Boris, did not want their son to be forced into military service in their native land.

AP reports describe Zilberman as grandson of Gregory Sokolov, a major in the Soviet Army in World War II. Zilberman decided to follow his grandfather's footsteps and joined the Navy after graduating from Bexley High School in 1997. He went on to graduate from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., where he majored in computer science. Zilberman's plane, an E-2C Hawkeye, was returning to the carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower following a mission supporting operations in Afghanistan when the plane experienced a malfunction. Zilberman ordered his crew mates to eject before going down with the plane into the North Arabian Sea.

While Anna Zilberman did not consent to an interview with the Forward because it would have been too difficult to speak about him, she said her son was a hero and a loving father and husband to his two children and wife, Katrina.

Steven Zilberman was killed on March 31, 2010. He was 31 years old.



SERGEANT FIRST CLASS (SFC) CHRISTOPHER CELIZ 'A NATIONAL TREASURE'

Christopher A. Celiz was born January 12, 1986 in Summerville, South Carolina. Celiz attended The Citadel from 2004 – 2006, leaving the college in good standing and enlisting in the Army in September 2007.

He was described as “an amazing person who became an even more amazing man”. Celiz began dating Katie in High School and became inseparable. He later married Katie.

He was on his fifth deployment with the 1st Bn., 75th Ranger Regiment, when he was killed on July 12, 2018 as a result of enemy small arms fire in Paktiya province, Afghanistan, during combat operations in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. At the time of his death, Celiz was serving as the battalion mortar platoon sergeant and was in the process of reclassifying to the infantry branch.

On July 18th, 2018, the mourners showed up by the hundreds, silently lining up in front of Congregation Mickve Israel in Savannah, GA., while the sounds of bagpipes filled the air. More than 300 people packed the synagogue and overflowed into the doorway. They were there to honor Sergeant First Class Christopher Andrew Celiz.

In honoring the memory of Christopher Celiz, 175 trees are being planted as a living tribute to his memory. In his home state of South Carolina, the Governor ordered flags flown at half-staff.

Friends remembered him as being smart, upbeat, and caring. To his 8-year-old daughter Shannon, he was her loving dad. He was 32.

REMAINING SERVICE MEMBERS WILL POSTED SHORTLY.