GI Jews: SC Goes to War
Register now for spring meeting in Charleston
May 2–3, 2015
In this issue

Report from the Front: Lt. Earl Mazo – Joseph Mazo Butwin – This aviator-journalist dropped bombs on the Germans and brought news from the front to American troops. In a letter home, dated August 6, 1945, he describes an encounter with a “displaced person” that brings the enormity of the Final Solution into focus. .............................. 4

A Few Among Many: South Carolina’s Jewish WW II Veterans – Jack Bass – The brother of two vets, one Missing in Action in the Pacific, the author relates a range of war experiences recorded through oral history programs at The Citadel and College of Charleston. ............ 6

GI Jews: South Carolina Goes to War – JHSSC meets in Charleston, May 2–3, 2015. ............ 10

“H” Is for Hebrew: A Jewish Combat Soldier and Prisoner of War – Alan J. Reyner, Jr. – A son discovers what his father endured as a POW captured by Germans and sent to the slave labor camp at Bergen. .............................. 12

A View from the Foxhole: Sam Siegel’s Story – Gale Siegel Messerman and Penny Siegel Blachman – Sam Siegel recorded searing impressions of events leading up to the war and his experiences in the Battle of the Bulge, never forgotten over 73 years of daily diary entries. ............ 14

Aboard the Huddleston: WW II Diaries of Dr. A. Ellis Poliaff, Captain, US Army Medical Corps – Edward Poliaff – The army physician’s memoir of life aboard a trans-Atlantic hospital ship in late 1944 includes accounts of Jewish services and the welcome provided to the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina’s spring meeting.

The stories in this issue provide a look inside what it meant to be a GI Jew in World War II. We are fortunate that we have many first-hand accounts from South Carolina’s veterans. Thank you to our authors who have shared their family members’ diaries and letters, and who have also researched extensively, not only the experiences of their fathers, brothers, uncles, and mothers, but their long-term effects. As one writer put it, “After reading about this, no wonder they didn’t want to talk about it when they came home.” We owe this generation a huge debt of gratitude.

I hope you will join us May 2–3 in Charleston for “GI Jews: South Carolina Goes to War.” We have a great lineup of presentations by noted historians and panelists who will share family memories and stories. We encourage those in attendance to bring photos or stories to share as well. We will conclude the weekend with two premiers: a screening of Raise the Roof, a new documentary about the reconstruction of a lost synagogue in the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw; and the launch of a new online exhibit, The Life of the Synagogue, based on the William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection at Addlestone Library.

Letter from the President

True words were never spoken, “The Greatest Generation” (to borrow Tom Brokaw’s phrase) did indeed save the civilized world.

Seventy years ago this May, after fighting across Europe in horrific battles beginning with D-Day at Normandy, these brave men and women liberated Europe from the hands of the Nazis. It is only fitting that we commemorate their heroism and acts of selflessness at the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina’s spring meeting.

I hope to see you all in Charleston in May. The 70th anniversary of VE-Day is an important marker in our history, collectively as Americans, and also as Jews.
Report from the Front: Lt. Earl Mazo

In the first week of May 1943, Earl Mazo of Charleston, South Carolina, crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the second time in his life. The first time was 20 years earlier when he left Warsaw, Poland, with his family, heading for America. He was three years old on that first crossing and apparently the life of the lower decks. On the second crossing he was 24, a second lieutenant and a trained bombardier, still lively, always pugnacious. “Nothing and nobody stands in his way,” his sister Norma wrote at the time. He was ready for a remarkable 32 missions over Europe in the rickety but reliable B-17s of the era, remarkable because the standard task was 25 missions. By the time Earl signed on for a second round, only 27 of the original 225 men in his wing remained. The records show a stunning number KIA—Killed in Action—while others were wounded or missing “somewhere in France” or in German prison camps.

Earl stopped at 32 missions because he got the chance to do in the army what he had already set out to do at home when he joined up in the spring of ’42. He was a journalist in Greenville, South Carolina, when the war began, along with his friend George Chaplin. Both men headed in the same direction when the military gave them the chance to become staff writers for Stars and Stripes, the newspaper published by the army in all theatres of action. George went to the Pacific; Earl was in Europe where he landed on D-Day plus 12 (12 days after D-Day) and accompanied Patton’s Third Army across France into Germany.

Stars and Stripes is unlike any newspaper I know. It was written for soldiers, mostly by soldiers with typewriters. We may know the splendid humor of Sgt. Bill Mauldin and the stirring journalism of the civilian Ernie Pyle; add Li’l Abner and Terry and the Pirates, abundant cheesecake, and a page or two of current sports. Earl traveled with Jimmy Cannon, himself already a seasoned sports writer whose style may have inspired his young friend.

At the heavily contested town of Metz on the German/French border, Earl begins, “About the only obstacle the Germans didn’t throw into the path of the Metz attackers was an ocean, and flood waters from the Moselle almost produced that.” He could be describing what Notre Dame threw at Army on Saturday afternoon back home, but only moments later he’s talking to a soldier who wouldn’t bother to change his socks during 18 hours of slogging through the waters of that wild river. Earl was there.

Earl’s friends Bud Hutton and Andy Rooney wrote a lively account of military journalism right after the war; Rooney returned to the subject 50 years later in My War (1995), where anecdotes, softened only slightly by the passage of time, describe Earl thumping his nose at Patton, who liked publicity just a wee bit more than he disliked the irreverence of soldiers and the insistence of officers (Lt. Mazo) and enlisted men (the other writers) that they be permitted to drink together. That was Earl, ever pugnacious, ever lively.

After VE-Day Earl stayed in Germany and went as far as Warsaw where he saw the rubble that replaced the neighborhood where he was born. En route he met the old man whom he describes in a letter to his mother. Earl was a tough guy in his time, not inclined to sentiment until he returned to the ruins of Eastern Europe. Later, major newspapers—the Herald Tribune and then the New York Times—would send him around the world and make the politics of Washington his home base, but nothing, I think, would match his first return to Europe in 1943.

Among American Jews, reverse migration—the return to Europe—had very little appeal until the war brought many back as soldiers. On the home front war also turned the attention of Jews to the Old Country, its geography (on battle maps), and its culture.

Earl’s older sister, Frances, and her husband, Julius Butwin, spent the same months that Earl gave to wartime journalism engaged in an imaginative return to Europe and what might be read as a tribute to its wandering remnant. They translated the Yiddish stories of Sholom Aleichem in 1945 and published them as a book, simply titled The Old Country, in 1946.
A Few Among Many: South Carolina’s Jewish WWII Veterans

by Jack Bass

In 1934, two months after I was born as the Bass family’s seventh child, my oldest sibling Bernie (Samuel Bernard Bass) enrolled as a freshman at the University of South Carolina. Six years later, he had a law degree and that summer opened a law office in our hometown of North in the western part of Orangeburg County. A year later he signed up for flight training at an army air corps base in Texas, but, like many others, washed out in advanced training at Maxwell Field in Alabama. Still determined to fly, in late 1941 he headed for the University of South Carolina, for training as a flight navigator. Meanwhile, my brother Herbie (Herbert), two years younger than Bernie, had gotten a pilot’s license as a Citadel cadet, graduated when he was 20, and reported for navy flight training at Pensacola, Florida. With a bit of time off, Bernie decided to visit his brother there on a Sunday. The day was December 7th—the day the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything—and my brothers would never see each other again. Herbie’s Dauntless dive bomber was shot down late in the Battle of Guadalcanal in January 1943, killing him instantly. Like so many others, for the family back home the news was devastating. The Nelson-Bass American Legion Post in North is named for Herbie Warshaw was an artillery officer whose unit entered Germany through the highly industrialized Saar region, often being strafed by German planes. Through all the fighting, his battery unit was credited with shooting down 15 of the battalion’s total of 52 German fighters. They had disembarked at Cassino on the Mediterranean that freezing cold January, providing artillery cover for Fifth Army infantry battling north after landing at Salerno on Italy’s southern coast. Americans captured Rome on June 4th, two days before D-Day at Normandy. Barely two months after D-Day, Warshaw and Hollings’s units both joined Operation Dragoon, the massive joint amphibious assault with French and British forces that invaded southern France. From there both units made parallel movements traversing 400 miles up the eastern border of France. They eventually joined Gen. George Patton’s Third Army, linking American with British forces, now stretched from the major Allied Atlantic landing port at Antwerp, Belgium, to the Elbe River in the west. Warshaw’s most powerful experience during the war came on April 30, 1945, the day Hitler committed suicide. By now a captain, his colonel took him to the just-liberated Dachau concentration camp. It was a ghastly sight, seeing piles and piles of bodies of dead, emaciated people, Warshaw recalled. They couldn’t be burned quickly enough by the Germans before they left the camp. When he opened the doors of two of the four ovens, the bones were still smoldering. The piles of bodies ran from eight to ten or eleven feet high, and the stench was absolutely horrible. After the colonel took many photographs with his camera, he handed it to Warshaw, who took more. Years later he archived them in the College of Charleston’s Jewish Heritage Collection. Henry Berlin of Charleston had not yet graduated from The Citadel, but he served in memorable action as a gunner’s mate aboard an LST (“Landing Ship, Tank”) in a 12-ship flotilla that crossed the English Channel to Normandy on D-Day plus three. “We made about three trips a week landing tanks and crews,” Berlin recalled. “And later we brought back several hundred POWs each trip.” Henry Rittenberg (Citadel ’38) seemed to wear a bad-luck ring that kept him from getting a commission. Short and stocky, he confronted unkind weight and height charts that twice blocked his getting a second lieutenant’s brass bar. On other occasions, changes in regulations stopped him after promotion papers had been sent in. As a Ninth Army corporal in March 1945, Rittenberg’s artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Bulge Pocket. “We did surveys for placing each battery,” he said. As a forward observer—often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank. Of all of South Carolina’s Jewish WWII veterans, it’s likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At mid-afternoon on June 5, 1944, Henry Berlin (Citadel ’38) seemed to wear a bad-luck ring that kept him from getting a commission. Short and stocky, he confronted unkind weight and height charts that twice blocked his getting a second lieutenant’s brass bar. On other occasions, changes in regulations stopped him after promotion papers had been sent in. As a Ninth Army corporal in March 1945, Rittenberg’s artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Bulge Pocket. “We did surveys for placing each battery,” he said. As a forward observer—often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank. Of all of South Carolina’s Jewish WWII veterans, it’s likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At mid-afternoon on June 5, 1944, Rittenberg’s artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Bulge Pocket. “We did surveys for placing each battery,” he said. As a forward observer—often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank. Of all of South Carolina’s Jewish WWII veterans, it’s likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At mid-afternoon on June 5, 1944, Rittenberg’s artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Bulge Pocket. “We did surveys for placing each battery,” he said. As a forward observer—often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank. Of all of South Carolina’s Jewish WWII veterans, it’s likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At mid-afternoon on June 5, 1944, Rittenberg’s artillery unit crossed the Rhine River and fought in the Battle of the Bulge Pocket. “We did surveys for placing each battery,” he said. As a forward observer—often stationed on a church steeple for height—he reported whether specific targets being fired on were hit. On VE-Day, his unit manned the west bank of the Elbe River, across from the Russians on the east bank. Of all of South Carolina’s Jewish WWII veterans, it’s likely that none could match Harold Aronson of Kingstree in terms of the most historically memorable moment. After a year in the infantry, he transferred to the army air corps and by 1944 was flying 17-hour weather reconnaissance flights from England, checking the weather along the coast of Europe and far out over the Atlantic Ocean. At mid-afternoon on June 5, 1944,
he took off on a routine flight and headed north to the southern tip of Greenland. The trip out meant flying 50 feet above the water to record surface conditions. The usual return flight was above the clouds to determine high altitude weather.

As was normal on such routine flights, Aronson turned on the radio that night after flying to the higher altitude for the return flight. He and his crew were listening to dance music from a Chicago station when, roughly two hours later, the music was interrupted and the station announced the Allied invasion of the European continent had begun. "It was news to us," Aronson recalled. "We didn’t know a thing about it. There we were, sending radio messages back. I sent one message: ‘Go ahead, Ike. The weather is horrible, but you can do it.’ When they flew over the English Channel while returning to base, Aronson recalled, "Looking down, it looked like you could step from one boat to another—there were so many boats in the channel." Once landed, he said, "I went to bed."

Harold’s brother Albert, also an aviator, had been shot down earlier over Romania. He spent 13 months as a prisoner of war, a period that overlapped D-Day. The first indication that he was alive and a prisoner, Harold said, came from the Vatican, which sent word to a priest in Charleston, "and the priest came from Charleston to Kingstree to inform my father." 4

NOTES

Audio and transcripts of these interviews are online at lcl.library.cofc.edu.
GI Jews: South Carolina Goes to War
Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of VE–Day
May 2–3, 2015, Charleston, South Carolina

Unless otherwise noted, all events will take place in Arnold Hall, Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Center, 96 Wentworth Street, College of Charleston.

Saturday, May 2, 2015

11:30 A.M. Registration/Lunch

12:30–1:30 p.m. Southern Jews and World War II: On the Home Front and Frontlines, Dan J. Puckett, Associate Professor of History, Troy University, Montgomery, AL. Introduction by Theodore Rosengarten

1:30–1:45 Break

1:45–3:00 FDR and the Jews: The Controversy Resolved, Allan J. Lichtman, Distinguished Professor of History, American University, Washington, DC. Introduction by Robert Rosen

3:00–3:15 Break

3:15–4:45 Notes from the Battlefield and the Home Front: A Panel Discussion
Moderator: Jack Bass, Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences Emeritus, College of Charleston
Panelists: Joseph Mazo Butwin, Gail Siegel Messerman, Herb Novit, Edward Poliakoff, Alan Reyner, Jr.

5:00 Reception, Alumni Hall, College of Charleston, sponsored by Nelson Mullins
Honoring Ann Meddin Hellman, recipient, Order of the Jewish Palmetto

Hotel reservations
Embassy Suites, Historic Charleston
337 Meeting Street (at Hutson Street)
Charleston, SC 29403
(843) 723-6900
Special rate: $339 per night plus tax

Holiday Inn, Mount Pleasant
250 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464
(843) 884-6000
Special rate: $179 per night plus tax

Red Roof Inn, Mount Pleasant
301 Johnnie Dodds Boulevard
Mount Pleasant, SC 29464
(843) 884-1411 or (800) 733-7663 toll free
Special rate: $93.49 per night plus tax, with group number B242JEHIST.

Sunday, May 3

9:00–9:45 A.M. JHSSC board meeting. Open to the public. Everyone is invited.

9:45–10:45 Teaching the Holocaust in the Land of Jim Crow, Theodore Rosengarten, Zucker/Goldberg Professor of Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston

10:45–11:00 Break

11:00–12:30 The Next Generation Remembers: A Panel Discussion
Moderator: David Slucki, author of In the Shadow of Memory: The Third Generation and the Holocaust (forthcoming in 2015)
Panelists: Lilly Stern Filler, Harlan Greene, Esther Goldberg Greenberg, David Popowski

12:30–1:30 P.M. Lunch

1:30–3:00 Raise the Roof: a feature documentary by Yari and Cary Wolinsky (2015) about the reconstruction of a lost synagogue in the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, Poland

3:15–4:30 Introduction to The Life of the Synagogue, an online exhibit based on the William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection, and discussion of Raise the Roof
Commentary by Samuel D. Gruber, president of the International Survey of Jewish Monuments, and Laurel Rose, Arnold Distinguished Visiting Chair, College of Charleston

Be sure to visit the Levin Library, 2nd floor, for special exhibition and book sale.
History records the Battle of the Bulge as the greatest American loss ever on foreign soil: 19,000 Americans were killed, 47,500 wounded, and 23,000 Americans were captured or missing, my father amongst them.

When I found my father’s memoirs, I can’t say it really meant a lot to me other than the fact that I, of course, was understandably proud of his service and his personal conduct. As kids, my brother, Jeff, and I would find old war memorabilia in a chest in the attic, but it was something that was never really discussed. Unlike many of my friends’ fathers, my dad never took up hunting or owned a gun. He was very uncomfortable when our uncle, an avid hunter, gave my brother and me shotguns. Simply put, my father had seen too much killing during the war.

Approximately 20 years after Dad died, during the spring of 1995, I received a call from a retired army chaplain named Tom Grove who also was captured at the Bulge and he enlightened me as to my father’s “real experiences” in WWII. One thing led to another, and I spent a large amount of time tracking down my war buddies. I talked to some 25 of them and got the opportunity to meet with— one of whom, believe it or not, was actually a neighbor. That in itself is a very interesting story, which I will share with you in May. It turns out that although my father’s accounts were accurate to a fault, he wrote with considerable restraint and omitted important facts. When I asked him what happened next that made his experiences so unusual, he threw his dog tags away. As one prisoner in the Guggenheim POW barracks in the freezing cold for two days with no food or water, that made for trying to escape. Vogel died shortly thereafter in the arms of a fellow prisoner, an army medic.

One wonders how the United States could, in the winter of 1944, send into battle American Jewish soldiers—more than $50,000—many of whom were fighting the Nazis with an “H” on their dog tags, the “H” standing for Hebrew. Many Jewish POWs threw their dog tags away. As one prisoner in the Guggenheim documentary said to himself when asked by the Nazis if he was Jewish, “Hell I was born a Jew. I may as well die a Jew.”

As mentioned, I talked to some 25 of Dad’s fellow combat soldiers who were prisoners of war at Berga and most have lived wonderful, productive lives. I sensed from my phone conversations and the letters I received from them they were special people, quiet heroes and true survivors in the finest sense of the word. That is certainly how I remember my father.
A View from the Foxhole: Sam Siegel’s Story

by Gale Siegel Messerman and Penny Siegel Blachman

Our father, Sam Siegel, was born to Russian immigrants on February 27, 1915, in Anderson, South Carolina, the fifth of eight children. At that time Anderson was a mill town with a small Jewish population and an active Ku Klux Klan. Sam and his siblings learned to deal with anti-Semitism from early childhood.

At the age of 19, Sam started keeping a daily diary, a practice that he continued religiously for 73 years, until his death on August 27, 2007. He left his family 17 volumes that chronicle his life and times. The daily entries continued throughout his active service in the US infantry between March 1944 and December 1945, including his harrowing experience in the Battle of the Bulge.

More than five years after Kristallnacht, Sam was inducted into the US Army’s 78th Division on March 29, 1944. Twenty-eight years old by then, he was married, living in Walterboro, and the father of two children. His two older brothers had already been drafted.

After eight months in basic training, the 78th was sent to Europe, arriving in England on October 25, 1944. Sam’s company spent some three freezing, wet weeks engaged in rigorous physical training and weapons practice. Sam was trained to use a bazooka. In November the men were shipped to France. “Still raining like hell,” he wrote, “the mud is ankle deep. . . . I haven’t taken off my clothes for days. I’ve lost the feeling of my foot. . . . Our tents are leaking like hell.”

On December 1st, as he neared the battlefront, Sam reported: “The buzz bombs are coming over fast, but our planes are also coming over.” Five days later he said “I’m ready. . . . I’ve got to be. . . . ‘I’ve got to be. . . . ‘I’ve got to be. . . . ‘I’ve got to be. . . . ‘I’ve got to be. . . . ‘I’ve got to be. . . . . .”

Sam was in the midst of the Battle of the Bulge. “Lots of casualties are coming back,” he wrote on December 13th. “Two fellows, anti-tankers, about two blocks from our truck got hit this morning by 88 fire. . . . Five days later his anxieties increased: “We keep getting rumors about paratroopers, etc comeing our way. If they do, we are caught like a bunch of rats in a trap. . . . Our morale is still high. But we all hope to see the end of it all.”

Sam’s company fought to defend against a massive German attack, often confronted by German soldiers in American uniforms invading foxholes. In January 1945 he wrote, “Our positions are going to face an attack soon. If so, will be a real battle because we are dug in for a fight and it’ll be hard for us to withdraw. In fact, it might be impossible. The bitter cold continued: “Th’ tears come from my eyes and freeze while on my cheeks. . . . If we could only see the end.”

Finally, the Germans began to retreat. Several days before his company entered Germany, Sam and three other men left their foxholes in an effort to bring in a wounded comrade. That is when Sam was hit. “An 88 got me in the leg,” he reported on February 7, 1945.

Repeated procedures failed and, in the end, Sam’s left leg was amputated above the knee. Although his long hospitalization involved pain, patience, and learning to walk with a prosthetic leg, Sam continued to write in his diary and to his family. Sam’s younger sister, Leah, who was the first family member to visit him, wrote to his wife, our mother, Leona: “What a wonderful husband you’ve got and how very proud I am of my brother. . . . Thank God he realizes how lucky he is; and he has a greater zest for life than ever. . . . He was full of jokes and stories and wanted to talk about his experiences over there. . . . He’s the life of the hospital. . . . Sam says he’s going to be the best dancer in S.C., bar none and that he and you are going on an extended honeymoon. He’s full of plans for the future for you, Gale, and Nancy; and he loves you all so very much. Please don’t worry about him, darling, and don’t be afraid of seeing him again for the first time. You’ll see how easy he makes it for you. He’s such a great guy.”

Sam returned home to Walterboro on December 20, 1945. For the next 62 years, he operated a store and other business enterprises and was involved in community organizations and activities in his town. He not only learned to walk again, but inspired many others to do the same. Sam was devoted to his family and to his country. The war memories were always with him, but they did not haunt him. He lived a life of service, grace, love, and humility.
T he five sons of David and Rachel Poliakoff of Abbeville, South Carolina, served their country in the World War II era like countless other Americans. All were proud University of South Carolina graduates, and from 1924 through 1940 at least one of the brothers lived in Burney College, Room 48, on the Carolina campus. Their beloved sister, Eva, graduated from Agnes Scott College. Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff, the eldest sibling, who had established his medical practice in Abbeville before the war, was a captain in the army medical corps, and his three years–plus service included duty on trans-Atlantic hospital ships. Brothers Marion and Myer (my father) served in the SC Defense Force in Walhalla and Abbeville, respectively, where they were dry goods merchants. Arthur (Bud) Poliakoff, who after the war practiced pharmacy in Atlanta, served in the army pharmacy corps, stationed overseas for more than three years. Dr. Samuel R. Poliakoff, the youngest sibling, who later established an Ob-Gyn practice in Atlanta, served in the army medical corps and was dispatched to Korea in late 1945. Ellis Poliakoff returned to the Jewish faith were present except a few. We were praying to the Almighty and I know everyone meant it. . . . We also said the prayer for a safe voyage.

In September 1944, during an outbound voyage on the USA Hospital Ship Huddleston, Captain Poliakoff expressed his hope of somehow connecting with Brother Bud, who was then stationed at Bristol, England. By chance the Huddleston was diverted to Bristol. The diary describes various hurdles he needed to surmount to have a phone call with Bud and arrange for him to visit the ship. Imagine the brothers’ delight when they reunited, and their melancholy when they parted:

> Just think, I came over 3000 miles across the ocean and of all the places I could have gone, I land near enough so we can meet. . . . After talking a while, he [Bud] decided he had to get back so we bade each other farewell. I sure hated to part. Wish we could have been going back to the States together. Watched him till the car disappeared from view, then I returned slowly to the ship. A happy reunion had ended. Sure hope it is not long till we can be home and stay there.

Jewish services aboard the Huddleston are a recurring theme:

**9 Sept. 1944**

We had a large crowd present for services. There were about 32 present. . . . I thought the services very impressive. . . . I brought a Talith for the boy [a T/S, or Technical Fifth Grade, who was a passenger] conducting services. There were Yarmulkes for all that needed them. We have a nice Kiddush cup. There were prayer books for all. What a strange picture this presented. Here we are hundreds of miles from land in the middle of the ocean on a deck near the water line of the ship in a room with a dim light. All seats were taken and I believe all members of the Jewish faith were present except a few. We were praying to the Almighty and I know everyone meant it. . . . We also said the prayer for a safe voyage.

**17 Sept. 1944**

To-night is the eve before Rosh Hashona. I have made arrangements for services. . . . What a strange place to be holding services but we want to have services. The Lord has been kind to me and I want to say my prayers especially at this time of the year.

**27 Sept. 1944**

Fasted all day. We had [Yom Kippur] services this morning at 10 a.m. again at 2:30 p.m., and again at 7:30 p.m. Boat drill interrupted the 2:30 service. . . . Almost every Jewish person on board came to at least one service . . . I think we did right well considering the circumstances and the fact that we didn’t have a Chaplain.

While the Huddleston was docked at the Port of Charleston preparing for another outbound voyage, Captain Poliakoff reported:

**6 Oct. 1944**

To-night, Mr. [Nat] Shulman brought four bottles of wine for the Jewish boys for Friday services. He represents the Jewish Welfare Board in Charleston. I had to go to the gate to meet him as he wasn’t allowed inside the Port unless he showed special passes. Lt. Col. O’Connor (Father O’Connor) drove me to gate and back.

Several passages describe Charleston vistas:

**1 Oct. 1944**

From the bridge deck, I could see familiar landmarks. Somehow from this view Charleston had a foreign appearance. It didn’t look like other American cities. The old homes with their style of architecture makes one think of some strange city not one he has known for so many years. I suppose many Americans feel that as it may, it was a welcome sight to a native South Carolinian.

**7 Oct. 1944**

Down the river we sailed watching the Charleston shore line. Under the Cooper river bridge or Grace Memorial Bridge as it is now called. . . . I saw many familiar landmarks that brought back memories of times I spent in Charleston as a [medical] student. The Francis Marion Hotel, Fort Sumter Hotel and Peoples Building, The steeples of many churches were visible especially the familiar ones of St. Michael’s and St. Phillip’s [sic]. Saw the dock of the United Fruit Company that burned the day before . . . On we sailed out through the submarine nets and into the wide Atlantic.

Numerous entries refer to hospital ship routine, including preparations and inspections, and rough seas that caused all those trying to rest to slide up and down in their bunk beds, and made the plates jump and down the table in the officers’ mess. There are no patient-specific passages or descriptions of injuries. That omission is consistent with patient confidentiality considerations, and perhaps consistent, too, with a passage written while home in Abbeville during a short leave in December 1944:

> One thing, I noticed which stood out to me after being around the sick and wounded, was the fact that no one seemed to be thinking of the war. It also seemed that everyone had some other topic of conversation. I suppose many had heavy hearts and were just masking their feelings. It was also at the time the Germans were pushing forward. Probably, it’s best to be this way and not think too much of the war.

After the war Dr. A. Ellis Poliakoff returned to Abbeville and continued his medical practice until his death in 1970, beloved and relied upon by his patients and the entire community.
On the Home Front: Pages from Yetta Bicoff Rosen’s Scrapbook

Yetta Bicoff and Nathan Rosen were introduced to each other by Nathan’s cousin Morris Rosen in Columbia. They were married in Greenville on May 5, 1942 at the home of Yetta’s parents, Sam and Bessie Rosen. Rudolph Robinson of Charleston home of Yetta’s parents, Sam and Rebecca Bicoff. Elizabeth Anne on June 12, 1945, at which time the Russell was born on March 7, 1944, and Rosens’ cousins by marriage. Their son Below the grandparents of Ira Berendt, the Rosen, at 55 Montagu Street, on the floor in with Nathan’s parents, Sam and Bessie wartime housing shortage, they moved then settled in Charleston. Because of the honeymoon at Lake Lure, North Carolina, Bicoff. Rudolph Robinson of Charleston home of Yetta Bicoff Rosen’s Scrapbook because of the South Carolina football 1943; Gift of Yetta Bicoff College of Charleston.

Like many others on the home front during World War II, the young couple was involved in civilian defense work, Yetta in the Citizens Service Corp, and Nathan in the Coast Patrol. From 1940 to 1946, Nathan served in the South Carolina House of Representatives. His brothers were active duty servicemen for dinner at the Elks Club; rationing flyer; US Navy ships on the Wando River, 1944; Clemson vs. South Carolina football program, dated October 21, 1943; Gift of Yetta Bicoff Rosen. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

From Strength to Strength by Martin Perlmutter

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has thrived as a grassroots organization. Ann Meddin Hellman stands out even among many extraordinary contributors and and will be honored at the May meeting with the Order of the Jewish Palmetto. That is the only award that JHSSC offers and it has been bestowed only three times in the Society’s history—to Iсадore Lourie, Max Heller, and Sol Breibart. I am thrilled that Ann is joining this distinguished group. She is a joy to work with and has almost single-handedly created and maintained the JHSSC website, including its statewide cemetery survey. We will celebrate with Ann in May—a heartfelt and well deserved mazal tov!

In its relatively short 20-year history, JHSSC has celebrated many successes, allowing us to claim the popular Jewish adage found in Psalm 84: we have moved from strength to strength. Our accomplishments include the Jewish Heritage Collection at the Addlestone Library, which, in collaboration with McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina, produced the landmark exhibit and book A Portion of the People; the recording of hundreds of oral histories; a statewide survey of Jewish burial sites; the erection of several historical markers; and the bi-annual publication of this remarkable newsletter.

As I look towards the future, I am confident that JHSSC will be brought to the “next level” by its partner organization, the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. The Center will focus on research, teaching, and community outreach. It will empower the Society to continue to do what we already do well—engage the community in learning about South Carolina Jewish history through lectures, conferences, walking tours, publications, websites, and historical markers—and will assure new and exciting explorations of southern Jewish history. Our May meeting, with its outstanding program, is evidence of the infusion of new energy from the Center for Southern Jewish Culture.

As a result of our fall 2014 membership survey, the JHSSC Past Presidents Council has committed to expanding our Pillar membership—those who pledge a thousand dollars a year for five years—to 40 Pillars, and our family memberships to 500 dues-paying members. These are attainable goals, but only if you join me in renewing your membership, committing what you can, recruiting new Pillars, and imploring those who find value in our work to do the same. We need your help!
Join the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina

Name: _______________________________________________________
Address: _____________________________________________________
City: _____________________________  State: ___  Zip: ______________
Phone: ___________________________  Fax:  ______________________
E-mail Address: _______________________________________________

ANNUAL DUES FOR 2015 (JANUARY–DECEMBER)

_____    Individual/Family Membership            $36
_____    Friend $200
_____    Institutional                                                                                                  $250
_____    Sponsor   $350
_____    Patron $750
_____    Founding patron $1,000
_____    Pillar ($1,000 per year for 5 years) $5,000
_____    Foundational Pillar ($2,000 per year for 5 years) $10,000

Join or renew online at jhssc.org.
Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional $36 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC and mail to the address above.

Register now for the May 2–3 meeting in Charleston.
See pages 10 and 11 for more information.