

Read the “Jewish Americans in World War II” passage set.

Jewish Americans in World War II

Source 1: Max Litwin

Written for UCF VLP by Sarah Schneider

1 Max Litwin was born in Poland on May 24, 1911 to Joseph and Fannie Litwin. Three years later in 1914, Mr. Litwin immigrated to the United States. He most likely came alone to find a home and to make enough money to bring the rest of his family over from Poland. Seven years later in 1921, Mrs. Litwin, Max and his three sisters joined their father in the United States. Once the family was back together, Mr. and Mrs. Litwin had two more sons and by 1930 they were a family of eight.

2 The Litwins were one of many Jewish families who lived in Providence, Rhode Island in the early 1900s. During that time, the number of people living in Providence more than doubled. By 1915, about 66% of the people living in Providence were new Jewish or Italian immigrants and their children. The Litwins were eight of the more than 8,000 Eastern European Jews in the city. These newcomers found work in the new factories popping up across the city and state. Mr. Litwin found a job as a salesman at a furniture store.

3 By 1930, Max Litwin was living and working as an insurance agent and salesman in Providence. But at the end of the 1930's, his father died leaving his mother to take care of herself and four of his siblings that still lived at home. One sister worked as a secretary and another as a social worker to help his mother support their family. In 1940, a year before the United States entered World War II, Litwin married Edith Fine and the couple moved in with her parents in Providence. Litwin was still working as a salesman for a roofing company and his new wife worked as a stenographer, or a person who works in a courtroom and types out what people say in a short hand code.

4 During WWII, many Jewish Americans, like the Litwins, worked hard to support the United States war efforts. At that time, Jewish American families made up only about four percent of the total number of people in the United States. In comparison, Jewish men made up about eight percent of the men serving in the military. Jewish women also supported the United States' war efforts. About 340,000 Jewish women served as nurses or in other roles in the US military during the war. Litwin and his brother Alfred were two of the many Jewish men who supported the war by joining the US Army. A year and a half after the United States

entered WWI, Alfred enlisted in the US Army and Litwin followed him a few months later. Litwin entered the military on August 1943 at the age of thirty-two and rose to the rank of Private First Class in the US Army by the time he finished his service in September 1944.

5 Despite the poor treatment many Jews faced in the military, “military service had empowered Jews as Americans and as Jews.” Many American Jewish soldiers were optimistic that their hard work and efforts in WWII would lead non-Jewish Americans, the government and the military to treat them more positively and to work towards equality for all.

6 After WWII, Miami was one of the “fastest-growing Jewish communities” in the country, and Litwin may have been part of this movement of Jews to the sunbelt. From February to April of 1945 a Max Litwin posted in the *Jewish Floridian* newspaper about a business called “Hotel Roberts Tailors.” The first postings in the newspaper list Litwin as being in business with Morris Enzer. By the postings in April, Litwin is listed as the only owner. There was a Hotel Roberts in Miami, so the business probably provided tailoring services in the hotel or at a location nearby. There is not enough information to know for sure that this is the same Max Litwin, but it is highly likely that it is.

7 In his later years, Litwin lived on Bay Harbor Island in Florida’s Miami-Dade County. Two of his sisters and Alfred also moved to South Florida. His sisters joined him in Florida in the 1970s. They were both actively involved in the Jewish communities of Rhode Island and Florida throughout their lives. Litwin most likely had a strong connection with the Jewish community as well. He died at the age of eighty-three on February 18, 1995. A memorial marker at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida pays tribute to his life and service.



Litwin's memorial marker at Florida National Cemetery. Image courtesy of UCF VLP.

Source 2: Sidney Malatsky

Written for UCF VLP by Sarah Schneider

1 Between 1900 and 1905, Simon and Anne Malatsky joined the many Jewish families leaving Russia to immigrate, or move, to the United States. They mostly likely wanted to escape the harassment and persecution against Jewish families that was common in Russia at that time. They joined a big wave of immigrants moving from Russia to Chelsea, Massachusetts. By 1915 there were more than 11,00 Russian immigrants living in Chelsea—the majority of whom were Jewish. Simon and Anne were married on September 3, 1913 in Chelsea. The couple had two baby boys who died in their infancy before having three girls and then, finally, Sidney. Sidney Jacob Malatsky was born on February 1, 1924.

2 Sidney Jacob Malatsky grew up in Chelsea with his dad as a storekeeper, his mom and his older three sisters. He attended Chelsea High School and went by the nickname “Jackie.” In a yearbook entry about him from 1941, a classmate wrote that, “‘Jackie’s’ face is usually hidden behind his books.” Jackie loved to learn! He made honor roll, participated in the debate club and was on the school yearbook staff. He also enjoyed music and was active in band and orchestra.

3 After Malatsky completed high school, he worked in a store before he enlisted in, or signed up for, the United States Army Air Corps Reserves. Jackie enlisted in the Army Air Corps Reserves on November 13, 1942 which was a little less than a year after the United States joined Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the other Allied countries to fight in World War II. He was eighteen when he enlisted that November and he entered the service that following January.

4 Jewish servicemen often faced difficult situations in the military because they were Jewish. For example, Jewish meals never include pork but meals in the service did. So Jewish servicemen had to decide if they would or would not eat the pork meals served by the military. Sometimes Jews even faced hostile treatment for being Jewish. Other times Jews had to deal with their fellow servicemen who did not understand their Jewish background. Some Jewish servicemen, however, did feel that their transition into military life went smoothly. As a Jew, Malatsky may have encountered these kinds of challenges or he may have had a smooth transition into the Army Air Corps Reserves.

5 Malatsky served in the 484th Bombardment Group and rose to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant during his service. Bombardment groups were groups of bomber planes that flew for the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. Malatsky’s bombardment group attacked specific locations like “oil refineries, oil storage plants, aircraft factories, heavy industry, and

communications in Italy, France, Germany, Austria” and other countries in Eastern Europe. In the spring and summer of 1944, the 484th Bombardment Group bombed parts of Rome, Italy to help Allied troops move in on Rome. They also carried supplies to the Allies in southern France and were later rewarded with two Distinguished Unit Citations. The citations were awards for success in the face of difficult challenges.

6 Malatsky played a role in many of these missions. He served as the bombardier on the plane. The bombardier was the person who directed and released the bombs. It was his job to hit their targets. In November of 1944, Malatsky left from an air field in Italy for a mission to bomb Vienna, Austria. On this mission, Malatsky’s plane was hit and went into engine failure. His captain decided to try to crash-land the plane east of Italy in the Adriatic Sea.

7 When the plane hit the water, it broke in half. The rear of the plane sunk to the bottom of the sea and most of the crewmembers were killed in this crash. At twenty years old, Malatsky was one of the crewmembers who was killed in the crash. The pilot of the plane survived and in his Missing Air Crew Report he wrote that Malatsky’s body and five others were never found.

8 Sidney “Jackie” Malatsky was awarded an Air Medal and Purple Heart for his military service. He is recognized on the “Tablets of the Missing” at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial just outside of Florence, Italy. He is life and service is also honored by a memorial marker at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.



Malatsky's memorial marker at Florida National Cemetery. Image courtesy of UCF VLP.

Writing Prompt

Write an informative essay comparing the lives of these two Jewish Americans veterans before, during and after World War II. Use information from the passages in your essay.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to include

- an introduction;
- information from the passages as support; and
- a conclusion that is related to the information presented.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.

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