JWV OF THE USA ★ 120 YEARS OF PATRIOTIC SERVICE

Joseph H. Stiner was named chairman at the first meeting of the Hebrew Union Veterans Association.

1896

For over 100 years, JWV has proven that Jews are an integral component in the defense and the maintenance of American security, and have made priceless contributions and differences in America's growth as a nation. In the years after the Civil War, there were cries that Jews had not risen up to come to America's defense. To counter this, 63 Jewish Civil War veterans came together on March 15, 1896, in New York City to form the Hebrew Union Veterans.

1900-1912

Jews who served in the Spanish-American war organized the Hebrew Veterans of the War with Spain. President Theodore Roosevelt, who had a Jewish contingent among his Rough Riders, was named an honorary member. The Hebrew Union Veterans and Hebrew Veterans of the War with Spain arranged for joint operations while retaining separate identities. In 1912, the organizations officially combined becoming the Hebrew Union Veterans Association (HUVA), which succeeded in securing passage of legislation removing restrictions against Jews serving in the New York State National Guard.

1917

Five years later, HUVA joined with several civic and religious Jewish agencies to form the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB). In January 1918, JWB was designated as the agency responsible for endorsing rabbis to serve as military chaplains and provide staff at military recreation centers at home and abroad.

1924

In 1924, the organization changed its name to the Jewish War Veterans of the Wars of the Republic. The following year, JWV published the first issue of a national magazine, *"The Jewish Veteran,"* which was mailed to all members. It has been published continuously ever since. Three years later, JWV successfully secured passage of legislation requiring the American Battlefield Monuments Commission to place Star of David markers on the graves of Jewish soldiers buried in war cemeteries in France.

1928 - 1929

JWV presented a charter to its National Auxiliary as a subsidiary organization in 1928. Posts were encouraged to establish local auxiliary units.

In 1929, the organization adopted the name which it has retained to date, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America.

1933

On March 23, 1933, JWV was the first organization to launch a boycott of German goods in the United States. More than 4,000 veterans marched on City Hall in New York where they were welcomed by political leaders. In July, the national commander went to Amsterdam to join in an international federation to promote the anti-Nazi boycott and JWV representatives met in Washington, D.C. with Congressional leaders to secure admission to the United States of German refugees fleeing Nazism. JWV assembled volunteers fluent in German to help resettle the arriving immigrants.

1938-1939

Starting with 30 Posts at the beginning of the decade, JWV expanded in ten years to 277 Posts in 1939. In 1936, JWV formed a second subsidiary organization, the Sons of JWV, for teenagers. By 1939, more than 10,000 members were recruited. Many were given the opportunity to attend summer camps sponsored by JWV in 1938 and 1939. Approximately one hundred Posts provided instruments and uniforms for the Sons of JWV drum and bugle corps.

1941

When World War II began, JWV leapt into action. Meeting ten days after Pearl Harbor, the National Executive Committee promulgated its 'Emergency Program for Victory,' which called for a comprehensive civilian program to support the war effort. JWV and its National Ladies Auxiliary sold war bonds exceeding $250 million, and purchased seven fighter planes. The first plane was named 'The Jewish War Veteran' and the second, 'The Star of David.'

1948

On January 1, 1948, the Jewish Welfare Board transferred to JWV, with the approval of the Veterans Administration (VA), responsibility to process claims for veterans and assist in securing benefits due them and their families under governmental regulations. On April 4, JWV staged the largest parade in Jewish history. More than 250,000 veterans, accompanied by 90 bands, marched down Fifth Avenue in New York City to support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. After five Arab nations invaded the newly formed state of Israel in May, JWV alerted its units to collect uniforms to be shipped to Israel. More than one million garments were sent within six months.

1954

In the mid-1950s, JWV moved its national headquarters to a building it purchased in Washington, D.C. The building also housed the JWV National Memorial which sponsored a museum and archives to preserve military records and achievements of Jewish service personnel – now known as the National Museum of American Jewish Military History (NMAJMH).

1963

JWV was the only veterans organization to join with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights march at the Washington Monument in our nation's capital in 1963.

Over the next thirty years, JWV continued to work closely with Israel and to assist Soviet Jewry during the Cold War, including large participation in 'The March for Soviet Jewry' in Washington, D.C. in 1987.

1996

In honor of its Centennial, *"Jewish War Veterans of the USA Celebrate One Hundred Years: 1896-1996"* opened in the NMAJMH, with more than 400 people attending the opening reception. The exhibit highlighted the influential role JWV has played in shaping major historical events of the twentieth century.

2002

On April 15, 2002, in Washington, D.C., JWV participated in the largest US rally ever on behalf of Israel. Over 100,000 friends of Israel were present that day.

PRESENT

Throughout the last decade, JWV has continued to thrive with over 400 Posts located around the country. Members participate in a wide variety of philanthropic activities to help veterans, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. These include holding holiday parties, providing gifts for veterans in VA hospitals and homes, donating gently used clothing and other goods, and fighting veteran homelessness.

Photos Courtesy of NMAJMH

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