

NEW "JEWISH SHIP" USS BRONSTEIN JOINS THE U.S. NAVY

By Chaplain Bernard Frankel

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A few weeks ago, I received a call from Pat Waite, the Catholic Chaplain and my colleague at the U. S. Navy Base at Yokosuka, Japan, in which he excitedly told me, "Bud, I met the captain of the Jewish ship which is in port now, and he would like you to pay him and the ship a visit tomorrow." "Do you mean an Israeli ship?", I replied. "No," he said, "this is an American ship with an American crew."



A VIEW OF THE MOGEN DOVIDS ON THE TORPEDO TUBES STORED ON DECK OF USS BRONSTEIN.

This introduction led to my exciting and fascinating visit to the USS BRONSTEIN (DE 1037), one of the first of a new class of ocean destroyer escorts employed by our Navy. It is the second U. S. Navy ship to bear the name of LTJG Gen Richard Bronstein, MC, USNR, who lost his life in action during World War II on board the

USS JACOB JONES. The first Bronstein was commissioned in 1943, served with distinction during the remainder of the war, and was presented to Uruguay in 1952.

As I went aboard the ship, bringing with me religious supplies received from the Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy of the National Jewish Welfare Board, I was graciously received by LCDR Bonhag, the Bronstein's commanding officer. With much pride, he talked about his ship and its crew and then treated me to a tour of the ship. Even though there has never been more than a few Jewish personnel on board ship, it has developed the reputation of being the "Jewish ship."

On its torpedo tubes, stored on deck, are emblazoned yellow Mogan Dovid. Its fueling pennant (used when the ship is stopped at sea to refuel) has a caricature of a yellow Buddha imposed upon a six-pointed star with the slogan, "What The Hell." Whenever the ship pulls alongside another ship, the medley "Hava Negilah" is played through the ship's audio system from a tap kept on board. On deployment for eight months in the Far East and now heading back to homeport in Long Beach, Calif., the ship's crew had proudly named themselves, the "Kosher Cruiser." Since theirs had also begun to call themselves, "The Wandering Israelites."

My impression was that this was no passing fancy, no joke, but a deeply ingrained tradition on this ship. It was such a pleasant experience to see the crew of one of our modern fighting ships take pleasure in being called the "Jewish Ship." It seems rather symbolic of the inherent democracy of our men in the

Navy that a whole ship crew, the great majority of the ship non-Jewish, should take great pride in being identified in terms of Jewish symbolism. Only in America?

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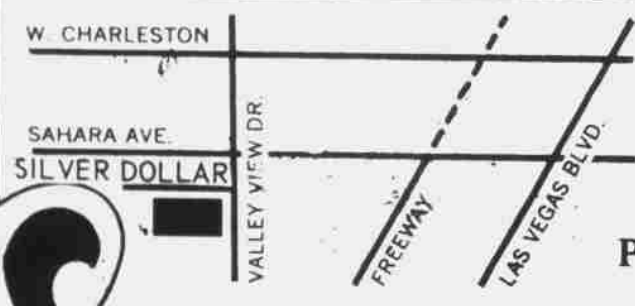
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