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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

## Weekly Newsgram - April 11th 2018

### A Chaplain who made a Difference

*Military chaplains go through stressful times in their calls to service. Sometimes one wonders if their contributions do make a difference. Below is a story of one chaplain who encountered unspeakable horror. His commitment and sacrifice changed lives and history. We remember his contributions here.*



**Chaplain Schacter leads Shavuot Service in Buchenwald 1945**

It was April 11, 1945, 73 years ago today, and Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army had liberated Buchenwald concentration camp scarcely an hour before. [Rabbi Herschel Schacter](#), who was attached to the Third Army's VIII Corps, was the first Jewish chaplain to enter in its wake.

That morning, after learning that Patton's forward tanks had arrived at the camp, Rabbi Schacter, commandeered a jeep and driver. He left headquarters and sped toward Buchenwald. By late afternoon, when the rabbi drove through the gates, Allied tanks had breached the camp. He remembered, he later said, the sting of smoke in his eyes, the smell of burning flesh and the hundreds of bodies strewn everywhere.

He would remain at Buchenwald for months, tending to survivors, leading religious services in a former Nazi recreation hall and eventually helping to resettle thousands of Jews.

In Buchenwald that April day, Rabbi Schacter said afterward, it seemed as though there was no one left alive. In the camp, he encountered a young American lieutenant who knew his way around. "Are there any Jews alive here?" the rabbi asked him.

He was led to the Kleine Lager, or Little Camp, a smaller camp within the larger one. There, in filthy barracks, men lay on raw wooden planks stacked from floor to ceiling. They stared down at the rabbi, in his unfamiliar military uniform, with unmistakable fright.

"Shalom Aleichem, Yidden," Rabbi Schacter cried in Yiddish, "ihr zint frei!" - "Peace be upon you, Jews, you are free!" He ran from barracks to barracks, repeating those words. He was joined by those Jews who could walk, until a stream of people swelled behind him.

As he passed a mound of corpses, Rabbi Schacter spied a flicker of movement. Drawing closer, he saw a small boy, Prisoner 17030, hiding in terror behind the mound. "I was afraid of him," the child would recall long afterward in an interview with The New York Times. "I knew all the uniforms of SS and Gestapo and Wehrmacht, and all of a sudden, a new kind of uniform. I thought, 'A new kind of enemy.' " With tears streaming down his face, Rabbi Schacter picked the boy up. "What's your name, my child?" he asked in Yiddish. Lulek the child replied.

Rabbi Schacter discovered nearly a thousand orphaned children in Buchenwald. He and a colleague, Rabbi Robert Marcus, helped arrange for their transport to France - a convoy that included Lulek and the teenage Elie Wiesel - as well as to Switzerland, a group personally conveyed by Rabbi Schacter, and to Palestine. For decades afterward, Rabbi Schacter said, he remained haunted by his time in Buchenwald, and by the question survivors put to him as he raced through the camp that first day.

"They were asking me, over and over, 'Does the world know what happened to us?' " Rabbi Schacter told The Associated Press in 1981. "And I was thinking, 'If my own father had not caught the boat on time, I would have been there, too.' "

After Buchenwald was liberated, Schacter spent every day there distributing matzo (liberation had come just a week after Passover); leading services for Shavuot, which celebrates the revelation of the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai, and which fell that year in May; and conducting Friday night services.

At one of those services, Lulek and his older brother, Naftali, were able to say Kaddish for their parents, Polish Jews who had been killed by the Nazis.

Discharged from the Army with the rank of captain, Rabbi Schacter became the spiritual leader of the Mosholu Jewish Center, an Orthodox synagogue on Hull Avenue in the north Bronx and went on to become a noted leader in the US until his death in 2013.

And what of Lulek, the orphan Rabbi Schacter rescued from Buchenwald that day? Lulek, who eventually settled in Palestine, grew up to be Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and served as the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv.

*The above from [New York Times article by Margalit Fox](#) March 26, 2013 on Rabbi Schacter's death.*

## **Executive Director Notes**

**MCA Annual Meeting** - As noted in last week's Newsgram, we now have the dates and location set for our National Institute/Annual Meeting. We plan to gather at the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel, starting at 1:00 pm, Monday, 5 November with a National Executive Committee meeting, and continuing through the Annual Banquet and Awards Dinner on Tuesday evening, 6 November to conclude with the memorial service, annual meeting, and keynote presentation on 7 November.



Immediately following our meeting, the United States Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association commences their meeting at the same hotel in the later afternoon of Wednesday, 7 November.

We are still working details for MCA registration, presentations, and schedule but mark your calendars now. Calls for presentations will be published in upcoming issues of the Newsgram, so stay tuned for additional information on our annual gathering.

**MCA Annual Awards** - One way that you can be active before arriving for our meeting is to review the awards listed on our website, [www.mca-usa.org](http://www.mca-usa.org). While Distinguished Service Awards are nominated by the Chiefs of Chaplains of each service, the other three awards, The David E. White Leadership Award, The National Citizenship Award and The G. William Dando Volunteer Service Award are determined primarily by input from the field.

While the White Award is selected jointly by a joint committee from the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and MCA, having nominations coming in from the membership to the NEC for this award provides the committee with some worthy candidates to review. Likewise, any nominations you may have for the National Citizenship Award and Dando Volunteer Service Award can be forwarded to the NEC as well. Award nominations should be received no later than Saturday, 30 June.

That is all for this week's column. Let us know how we can continue to make MCA relevant for you in your respective ministries through either Advocacy, Communication or Education.

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## Arlington National Cemetery Eligibility Survey



The leadership of Arlington National Cemetery has launched a second survey that is asking for everyone's thoughts on an important issue - the future of Arlington National Cemetery.

The survey is now available [here](#).

The Congressional Commission considering the future of Arlington thanks all who completed the initial survey. This follow up will provide more detailed information on specific issues so the Commission can make informed decisions on the future of this hallowed ground. The goal is to preserve ANC as an active cemetery for generations to come.

The survey can be shared and/or accessed on the cemetery's website at:  
[www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/eligibility-survey](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/eligibility-survey).

# Women's Military Chaplain Training May 29-31, 2018 LAST CALL

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces and the Military Chaplains Association are co-sponsoring the Women's Military Chaplain Training on May 29-31, 2018 at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center, Marriottsville, Maryland. The focus of the training is Connect, Cultivate and Contextualize. Women serving as military chaplains in all components and all services are invited to attend. Unfortunately, chaplain candidates are not able to attend.



Those attending the training will increase networking skills, resilience and pastoral identity while decreasing isolation. Chaplain (Major General-Retired) Lorraine Potter, first woman Chief of Chaplains for the Air Force, will be the keynote speaker. She will address how to cultivate a network while increasing resilience. Chaplain Potter will also share her story as the first female Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force and provide mentorship and modeling for those in attendance.

**Registration** is open through **April 16th**. Cost is \$150 per participant. This will cover all meals and lodging.

The Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center is at 1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104, [rccbonsecours.com](http://rccbonsecours.com) 410.442.3120. Each room is a single room with a private bath providing toiletries and towels. The closest airport, the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), 7035 Elm Road, Baltimore, MD 21240, is 22 miles away.

All meals will be served in the dining room and two hospitality rooms will provide fresh fruit and beverages 24 hours a day. If you have special dietary needs, please fill out the appropriate form available at on-line registration.

More information is available at [NCMAF.net](http://NCMAF.net)

## The Military Chaplains Magazine 2018 Themes and Submission Deadlines

### **Spring Issue** - *The Intersection of Spiritual and Psychological Care*

Articles to be submitted by April 30

Publication May 21

### **Summer Issue** - *Chaplains and World War 1*

Articles to be submitted by June 30

Publication July 23

### **Fall Issue** - *Religious Accommodation in 2018*

Articles to be submitted by September 30

Publication September 24

### **Winter Issue** - *Chaplaincy and Religion in a Post-Truth World*

Articles to be submitted by November 30

Publication December 21

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