

The JEWISH VETERAN



I Am An American

I am an American.
The Golden Rule is my rule.
In humility and with gratitude
to Almighty God,
I acknowledge my undying debt
To the founding fathers
Who left me a priceless heritage
Which now is my responsibility.
With steadfast loyalty
I will uphold the Constitution
And the Bill of Rights.
I will treasure my birthright
Of American ideals.
I will place moral integrity
Above worldly possessions.
Problems of interest to my country
Shall be of interest to me.
I will count my right of suffrage
To be a sacred trust,
And I will diligently strive
To prove worthy of that trust.
I will give my full support
To upright public servants.
But those with unclean hands,
I will firmly oppose.
Each obligation that comes to me
As a true American,
I will discharge with honor.
My heart is in America
And America is in my heart.
I am an American. (By Benjamin E. Neal)

APRIL



1940

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My Recollections of FATHER DUFFY

By MILTON D. COHN

*National Senior Vice Commander,
Disabled American Veterans of the
World War.*

The recent motion picture dramatization of the exploits of the "Fighting 69th", New York's famous regiment has served to again focus public attention on the noble career of the late Father Francis P. Duffy, its chaplain. As one of the handful of Jewish boys in the regiment, whose personnel was about 95 per cent of Irish extraction and of the Catholic faith, I have been asked by the Jewish Veteran, to set forth some of my experiences with the noted Chaplain.

I consider this a happy task because it not only serves to bring back pleasant memories of my associations with this great American and humanitarian but it also brings home to me, as I start writing, the crying need today of following the simple teachings of Father Duffy. If it were abroad in the world today, there would be no international hatred and religious bigotry, which now confront us.

The spirit of Father Duffy, that of understanding, kindness and charity pervaded the 69th which, on the formation of the 42nd (Rainbow) Division became known as the 165th infantry. I was born in New York and reared in a neighborhood that is typical of New York. There was virtually every race and creed represented and despite this divergence, there was virtually no bigotry, no violent clash of opinion other than the usual childhood scraps and quarrels.

Therefore, it was only natural that I would want to serve with the old 69th. Many of my friends from the old neighborhood had joined and when I was sent to Camp Mills in 1917, it was just like being back in the old neighborhood again.

My first pointed experience with the type of man that Father Duffy was, came shortly after my arrival. It was visitor's day and a civilian who was being introduced by a soldier friend to members of my company, made the following remark when he was introduced to me: "Cohn, eh? How come they ever let a Jew in this outfit?" Father Duffy was standing nearby when the remark was made and sensing that I had become angered over it, rushed over and grabbed the civilian by the collar of his coat and took him to one side and told him in a stern tone: "Young man, the members of this regiment are good men and good Americans. We make no distinctions here. They are men, not Jews or Irish or any other nationality."

During the next two years, whether it was on the battlefields of France, in a quiet sector, training area or any other place, I was to find that this was to hold true, and because it did, it was due to one person, and that was Father Duffy.

The 69th was unique in more ways than one. While other regiments had three chaplains, a Rabbi, Priest and Minister, we had only one, Father Duffy, but I

must say that myself and my Jewish friends were not without spiritual solace. On many occasions we attended the Catholic services and noting that we were there, Father Duffy always went out of his way in his sermon to comment on our presence and how pleased he was that we had come.

His attitude toward us in matters of religion was typical of his understanding. He had a respect for our religious beliefs, that at times appeared to be profound. His concern for us seemed, on some occasions, to even overshadow that for the boys of his own faith.

There was one time, for instance, when Rosh Hoshanna was approaching and we were located in a village some twenty miles from Toul, the nearest large city. While we would have liked to have leave to attend the synagogue, we did not think permission would be granted. A few days before, Father Duffy approached me and said: "Milton, I have arranged for you and the other Jewish boys to go to Toul so that you can attend the synagogue. I believe that you wanted to go to observe this important day and I have received the necessary permission for you."

It was the utter simplicity of the man that impressed me most. He was, of course, privileged to eat at the officer's mess but preferred, most times, to sit down in a field, or around a rolling kitchen and eat with some of us enlisted men. He was the embodiment of Kipling's famous poem, "If," of "Walking with Kings and not losing the common touch." But, to Father Duffy, there were no Kings or common men. They were all members of the same fraternity, bound together, in his mind by the spirit of brotherhood. That was Father Duffy's ideal. What a better world this would be today if men and nations could combine in such fashion and wipe out bigotry and hatred.

The man had a tremendous force of uplift, and brought it to the fore when it was most needed. There was an incident of this that stands out in my mind which gave me the courage to face a situation, which soldiers must of necessity meet. We were going up to the front beyond Chateau-Thierry and as the boys passed into the darkness single file, each one stopped as he passed Father Duffy, bowed his head and Father Duffy raised his hand and prayed. When I approached, he addressed me:

"Milt, what can I do for you?"

He was making obvious reference to the fact that I was a Jew and, as on every

other occasion, he was not going to perform any Catholic rite unless I asked first.

"What are you doing for the other boys, father?" I asked. He said he was giving them his blessing, and I said:

"All right, father, you can give me your blessing."

The intonations of the words gave me new courage. I could not help but think, and do to this day, that here was a man of true sincerity with almost a fanatic concern for those he loved.

It was through the efforts of Father Duffy and others, that the first decoration for bravery to be awarded a member of the regiment went to a Jewish boy, Sergeant Blaustein. The sergeant had displayed outstanding courage in trying to rescue twenty-odd men who were trapped in a dugout on which the enemy had scored a direct hit. His heroic work was brought to the attention of the French government, which awarded him the Croix de Guerre.

My principal assignment during the war, was as a runner for Major William J. Donovan, who later became Colonel of the outfit. Colonel "Wild Bill" Donovan, as he is affectionally known to the men of the "69th." When he was wounded and we were loading him into the ambulance, an officer spoke to Father Duffy:

"Well, Father, I suppose that the papers in New York will have it all over the front page about our "Wild Bill" being wounded."

Sorrowed as much as he was over the Colonel's plight, he used the incident to drive home forcefully his constant preaching on the equality of man.

"Yes, I suppose they will," the priest answered. "But, if little Milt Cohn was wounded or even killed, he would probably receive little mention, if any, but yet he is entitled to just as much space as the greatest General. They're all fighting for the same cause."

Shortly after the Colonel was wounded, I had the misfortune to become both gassed and wounded and was removed to base hospital 76 at Vichy. Imagine my surprise and pleasure one day when I was convalescing, to have Father Duffy drop in and pay me a visit. Although I was in pretty bad shape, he urged me to have courage and faith and told me that I would recover.

During my confinement for six months in the hospital, I received several letters from Father Duffy and all contained words of cheer, which played no small part in aiding my recovery. It is at such times that we can use words of solace and Father Duffy, as always, was there to give them.

(Continued on page 19)

Jewish Veteran

"THE PATRIOTIC VOICE OF AMERICAN JEWRY"

J. GEORGE FREDMAN • Editor

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Jewish War Veterans extend their sympathy on the death of Dr. Cyrus Adler, President of the American Jewish Committee and venerable Jewish leader and scholar. Dr. Adler's prestige, experience, ability and understanding would be a serious loss at any time, but during the present crisis, is almost irreparable.

Congratulations to Frank L. Weil, who has just been elected President of the National Council of the Jewish Welfare Board. We bespeak for him a successful and constructive administration.

Secretary of Interior Harold L. Ickes says: "The fate of both Jews and Christians is so closely linked that one cannot be injured without serious damage to the other. It is a fatal illusion to think that you can throw a Jew into the arena and therewith satisfy the beast. The experience of mankind has shown that the more you throw to the beast the more bloodthirsty he becomes, until in the end he devours the very one who has fed him.

"There is no safety under the sun for civilized man except under conditions of genuine toleration and inalienable legal equality."

These are words of wisdom which more Americans should consider.

Secy. of War Woodring and General Geo. Marshall warned Congress to speed our preparedness program. We must put our house in order they stated before the sparks reach the Western Hemisphere. Asst. Secy. of War Johnson stated that while we could mobilize a million men in 9 months, it would require 15 months to mobilize industry to supply a million men with necessary equipment and ammunition.

Sons of J.W.V. are being revived by Chairman Abe Kraditor. Before the year is out, almost every post will have a Sons unit. Constitution and By-Laws and extensive programs are being formulated. The future of J.W.V. will descend to our Sons, and no post should be left without an heir.

Features - April, 1940

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Has the Editor overlooked some important function of your Post? The fault is probably yours. We are not oracles or miracle-men. If you have an item of general interest, send newspaper clippings and original photos to the Editor—we want news and pictures of your activities.

If you can't personally attend our National Memorial Services, don't fail to listen in. Watch May issue of "J.V." for

speakers and stations. The list of those who have accepted invitations to attend reads like a "Who's Who" of American "greats." Don't miss it.

It's great to be an American!

With the recent invasion of Scandinavia, the hearts and minds of Americans are deeply concerned with what is going on in Europe. No matter what our distance from the scene of the struggle, we cannot altogether be detached from it. "Neutrality" has long since lost its meaning. If we recall our "Mein Kampf," Hitler aims at Nazi world domination, which does *not* omit the U.S.A.

But we're thankful that instead of mobilizing our young men with guns and tanks and gas masks, they are mobilizing with bats and gloves and baseballs, and the only masks we know are the catchers' masks. And meantime, we older ones are shining up rods, hooks and reels preparatory to our annual fishing jaunt.

Yep, it sure is great to be an American! But do you appreciate *that*?

Leave it to the Nazis to get their goods "through." Their latest stunt is to send only the lightest and most valuable exports to the U.S.A.—and *through the MAILS!* German traders who had closed down temporarily in Latin America, are now busy again offering goods ostensibly of Italian or other neutral origin, but *actually* German. Some of these goods will seep through to the U.S.A. Germany needs this foreign exchange very badly. The Boycott is still on, so don't be caught off your guard, or asleep.

The article by U.S. Sen. Wiley on Saluting the Flag is very timely. Americanization, Memorial and Flag Day parades will soon be marching by. Many Americans, especially younger men fail to remove their hats or salute our flag. Patriotism must not be forced, but in many cases lack of respect is due to ignorance or lack of appreciation of its meaning. The next step is to see that every American home possesses an American Flag and displays it on patriotic occasions.

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