Max Litwin May 24, 1911 – February 18, 1995 World War II





Max Litwin (May 24, 1911–February 18, 1995)

By Sarah Schneider

Early Life: Family and Immigration to Providence, Rhode Island

Max Litwin was born on May 24, 1911 in Poland to Joseph Litwin and Fannie Litwin, née Mlawski. Joseph Litwin immigrated to the US in 1914, most likely to establish himself in the US and earn enough money to bring over the rest of his family. In 1921, Litwin, his mother, and Litwin's siblings - an older sister, Sarah, and two younger sisters, Matilda and Helen - joined their father in the United States. After the family settled in the US, Litwin's brothers Paul and Alfred were born. By 1930, the family of eight was living in Providence, Rhode Island where Joseph Litwin worked as a salesman at a furniture store, as is seen here on the 1930 US Census.

A Jewish family, the Litwins were part of a wave of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who settled in Providence, Rhode Island in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when there was a "250 percent" surge in the state's population due to industrialization and the surge of manufacturing jobs. Much of this economic activity centered in Providence, which attracted Jewish and Italian immigrants in particular. By 1915, about two-thirds of Providence residents were immigrants or first-generation Americans. That same year, there were over 8,000 Eastern European Jews in the city.⁵

In the 1930s, Litwin lived and worked as an insurance agent and salesman in Providence.⁶ Litwin's father died in 1939, as is noted here in a 1941 City Directory, leaving Fannie Litwin to take care of the family.⁷ In 1940, four of Litwin's siblings still lived at home, while Sarah worked as a secretary and Matilda worked as a social worker in order to contribute to the family income.⁸ In 1940, Litwin married Edith Fine; the couple lived with Litwin's father-in-law in Providence.⁹ That year, Litwin worked as a salesman for a retail roofing company and his wife worked as a stenographer.¹⁰

Service in the US Army during World War II

On May 18, 1943, Litwin's brother Alfred enlisted in the US Army. ¹¹ Litwin entered the military a few months later on August 17, 1943 at the age of thirty-two. ¹² Jewish men such as Max and Alfred Litwin comprised about eight percent of those serving in the US military during World War II, "about twice their proportion to the population as a whole." ¹³ Additionally, about 340,000 Jewish women served as nurses or in other roles in the US military during the war. ¹⁴ Despite the discrimination and anti-Semitism that many Jews faced in the military, "military service had empowered Jews as Americans and as Jews" and many American Jewish soldiers were optimistic that the US would strive towards its purported values of democracy and equality. ¹⁵ Before Litwin's service ended on September 14, 1944, he rose to the rank of Private First Class in the US Army. ¹⁶

Post-Service Life and Work in Miami, Florida

Litwin may have worked in Miami, Florida soon after his military service. ¹⁷ In the postwar period, 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. ¹⁸ From February to April of 1945 a Max Litwin posted in the *Jewish Floridian* newspaper about a business called "Hotel Roberts Tailors." ¹⁹ The postings in the newspaper originally listed Litwin as being in business with Morris Enzer, but by April, Litwin is listed as the sole owner. ²⁰ There was a Hotel Roberts in Miami, so the business probably provided tailoring services in the hotel or at a location nearby. ²¹ There is not enough information to know for sure that this is the same Max Litwin, but it is likely that he ran the business.

Litwin ultimately lived on Bay Harbor Island in Florida's Miami-Dade County.²² At least three other Litwin siblings, Matilda, Sarah, and Alfred Litwin, also moved to South Florida.²³ Sarah and Matilda Litwin moved to Florida in the 1970s and were actively involved in the Jewish communities of Rhode Island and Florida throughout their lives.²⁴ Litwin may have had a similarly strong connection to his Jewish identity and the Jewish community. He died at the age of eighty-three on February 18, 1995 in Florida.²⁵ A memorial marker at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida pays tribute to his life and service.²⁶

Endnotes

- 1 "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Florida National Cemetery.; "1930 United States Federal Census," database, Ancestry.com, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Providence, Providence, RI.; "Matilda R. Litwin," The Providence Journal, November 11, 1989, page A-09, NewsBank.
- 2 "1930 United States Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Providence, Providence, RI.
- 3 Ibid., "Rhode Island, State Censuses, 1865-1935," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed July 18, 2017), entry for Max Letwin sic, Providence, RI, Ward 2. Note: The 1925 Rhode Island State Census lists the youngest brother as "Abraham," but it appears to be referring to Alfred Litwin.
- 4 "1930 United States Federal Census," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Providence, Providence, RI.
- 5 Ibid., 9-11, 16.
- 6 "Rhode Island, State Censuses, 1865-1935," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Providence, RI, 1935.; "U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed July 19, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Providence, RI, 1937.
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- 8 "United States Census, 1940," database, *FamilySearch.org*, https://www.familysearch.org (accessed July 17, 2017), entry for Fannie Litwin, Ward 3, Providence, RI.
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- 12 "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Florida National Cemetery.
- 13 Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 221.

14 Ibid.

15 Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 259.

- 16 "U.S. Veterans Gravesites, ca. 1775-2006," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Florida National Cemetery.; "U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin.
- 17 "Legal Notices," *The Jewish Floridian*, February 16, 1945, page 5, University of Florida Digital Collections, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010090/00889/6x?search=max+litwin.
- 18 Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 134.
- 19 "Legal Notices," *The Jewish Floridian*, February 16, 1945, page 5, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010090/00889/6x?search=max+litwin.; "Legal Notices," *The Jewish Floridian*, March 2, 1945, page 6, University of Florida Digital Collections, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010090/00891/6x?search=litwin.; "Legal Notices," *The Jewish Floridian*, April 20, 1945, page 6, University of Florida Digital Collections, http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00010090/00898/6x?search=litwin.

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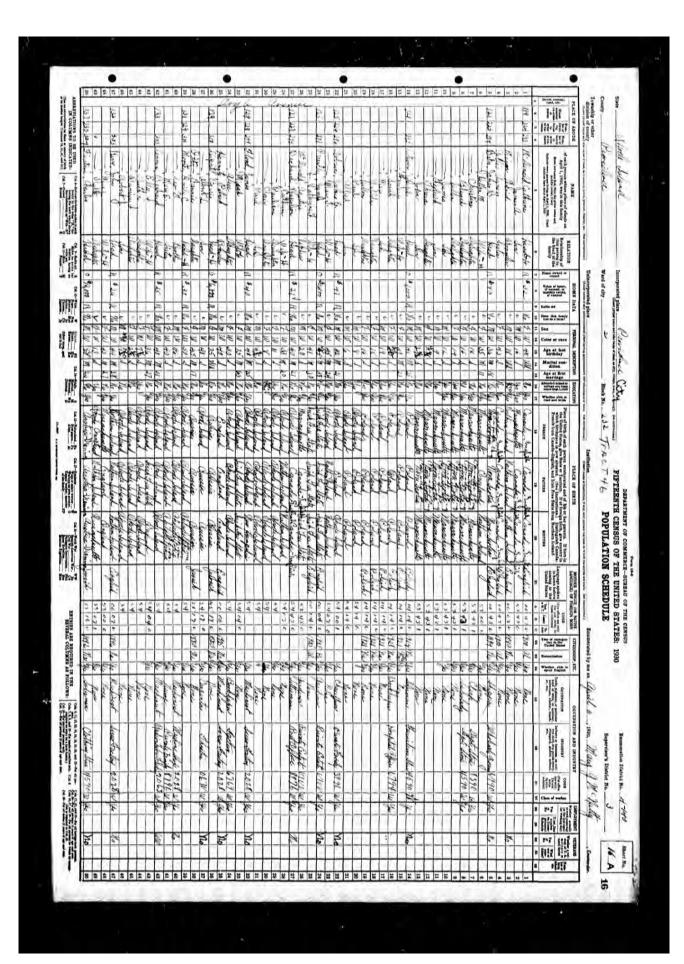
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- 22 "Local...Litwin, Max," The Miami Herald, February 22, 1995, page 4b, NewsBank.
- 23 "Matilda R. Litwin," *The Providence Journal*, November 11, 1989, page A-09, NewsBank.; "Sarah Litwin," *The Providence Journal*, May 11, 1990, page C-02, NewsBank.; "Area Deaths…Litwin, Alfred I.," *The Palm Beach Post*, April 13, 2006, page 9B, NewsBank.
- 24 "Matilda R. Litwin," *The Providence Journal*, November 11, 1989, page A-09, NewsBank.; "Sarah Litwin," *The Providence Journal*, May 11, 1990, page C-02, NewsBank.
- 25 "Local...Litwin, Max," *The Miami Herald*, February 22, 1995, page 4b, NewsBank.; "U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014," database, *Ancestry.com*, https://www.ancestry.com (accessed June 12, 2017), entry for Max Litwin, Miami, 33154, Miami-Dade, FL.
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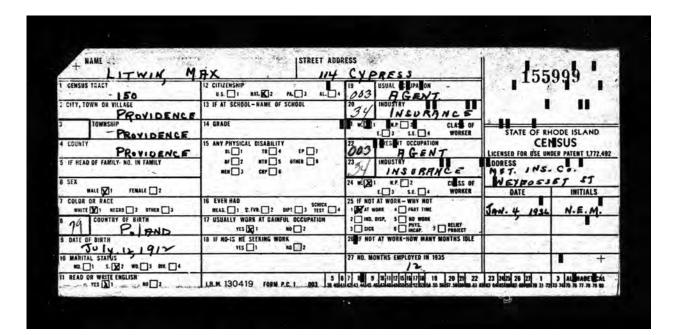
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