

# Military's expanded recognized religions list worthwhile challenge

I vaguely recall in filling out my Army enlistment papers in the 1950s, being asked to either check one of the six or so religions shown, check no preference, or to write one in on the blank line provided.

Fast-forward to the present, when I recently received a government news release announcing the Department of Defense increasing its list of recognized faiths and belief systems from a little over 100 to an expanded list of 221.

Some of the faiths I had never heard of included; Eckankar, Heathen, Church of the Spiral Tree, Troth, Wicca, Pagan, Deism and Asatru.

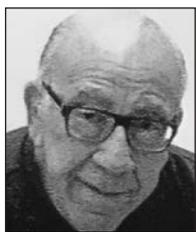
What a shocker! Obviously I have not been following developments in this area. It seems that there have been growing numbers of military enlistees whose faiths and belief systems were not among the mainstream and not officially recognized.

So, how does this recognition of religious belief systems outside the traditional mainstream faiths help the military and its members?

The Chaplains Corps believes that by being all-inclusive, service members of the non-mainstream faiths will now feel more accepted and will be more willing to approach Chaplains of any faith with the expectation that they will be heard and helped.

For incoming Jewish military, they can still choose "Jewish" or one of the three (Orthodox, Conservative or Reform), bringing the number of Jewish choices to four.

Before one criticizes our military leaders for possibly making things more complicated and



**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

By Jerry Kasten

confusing than they need to be, consider the following.

There is a rational justification for developing a more accurate, complete list of faith groups to which a military member may belong.

This change means that servicemen and -women who are members of small faith groups will now have the same rights and protections granted

to service members of the larger, traditional faith groups.

Before the faith group list was expanded, there were some military who were refused time off for religious observances because their faith was not listed. Some service-members were even punished and given extra duty for requesting time off.

Our military now recognizes the 200-plus listed faiths, allowing all service-members to attend and/or observe legitimate holidays, if possible. Of course, the needs of the military always come first, no matter what the religion or holiday.

On one hand, this expanded list of recognized faiths by the U.S. Military sounds fair, democratic and inclusive, but at the same time it must present a challenge to the Chaplain Corps who are generally not members of those sects.

Let us wish them well. Hopefully this expansion of faith acceptance will serve to further strengthen the unity of the men and women of our military.

Bless them all, whatever their faith.

slightly different.

Some people busy themselves at their craft, their knowledge, their career, their spiritual connection, while forgetting to pay attention the most important thing — the likability of face. Most of who you are — your wisdom, joy, appreciation for life, tolerance for people, what's going on in the inside — merges in the facial features. And that's something that is built through attitude and action over time.

Often times, as knowledge accumulates, facial features become tense and overly scholarly. It is not hard to spot the soft-spoken guide who appears wise, sounds like a healer, yet the face reveals a much less joyful and personable soul. Similarly, the self-indulgent individual who becomes consumed with chasing gratifications and status, over time develops coarse flesh and facial features, like a walking wax figure. Aesthetic appeal becomes a substitute for personality. In a vain effort to manufacture physical beauty, the soul's beauty and grace become buried (like the caricature of deeply-dyed blonde hair, with orange-tinted skin overripe from tanning booths, and an excess of facial paint — all which serve to mask the soul's expression).

In contrast, a colorful, rich and refined inner world allows the soul's light ease to penetrate into an open visage. Optimistic energy flows naturally. People feel comfortable, not intimidated, in such a presence. The person's face is inviting and the possibility for true connection between people begins.

So while spiritual development involves pursuing the three fields of wisdom, lots of action and connection with others, they culminate in a pleasant countenance.

# DFW's Upstanders create life-giving legacy



**GUEST COLUMN**

By Mary Pat Higgins

Spring storms deluge the East Texas town of Canton, causing a car to roll over into waist-high runoff, trapping two children and their father. Complete strangers wade in, pry open the doors, and rescue the ones trapped inside from drowning.

A reckless thief driving a stolen car causes a Dallas police officer to crash his patrol car into a creek; hearing the crash, those nearby see the police officer in trouble and rush to aid, together turning the car over, and rescuing the officer, who is hurt but now recovering from injuries.

While news headlines are filled with horror stories about man's inhumanity, it's vital that we take time to celebrate the unheralded heroes who consciously choose to take action, often without regard for their own safety and well-being, to stand up and help out others.

At the Dallas Holocaust Museum, we call these people Upstanders and you can find them everywhere, every day, reflecting what's right about humanity — and there is a good chance that you know an Upstander, or may be one yourself.

This month, as we remember the five local law enforcement officers — four Dallas Police officers and one DART officer — who died while protecting citizens during a peaceful march, as well as the 11 others who were injured in the July 7, 2016, tragedy, it's more important than ever to reflect on the good that reveals itself amid the all-too-common moments of human-created tragedy.

The undercover officer who literally used his body as a shield to protect a woman and her two children as gunfire from the shooter whizzed over their heads; citizens who lined up for hours to give blood to shooting victims; the outpouring of kindness and support from across the city, the state and the nation in the days following the incident. These acts represent the best of humanity.

When a middle- or high-school student visits the museum, our goal is to help them reflect on the dangers of prejudice, of what happens when people don't stand up to hatred and

indifference. Independent research we've commissioned shows that student attitudes and levels of tolerance are positively impacted by their visits, and teachers have reported that students exhibit

more Upstander behavior after visiting the museum.

This year, we will break ground on a new permanent museum and education center — a 50,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility in the West End Historic District of downtown Dallas — the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum. The goal of this new museum which will reach more than 200,000 visitors a year, most of whom will be students in grades 6-12, is to create future generations of Upstanders.

A new, permanent home for the Museum has been the dream of local Holocaust survivors who founded the Museum nearly 35 years ago in the basement of the Dallas Jewish Community Center. Their vision was that it serve as a lasting, living memorial — and ongoing testimony to human rights — to create new generations of Upstanders.

Building the new Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum is the next bold step our city must take to fulfill a much larger human mission — to mold each new generation to embody the Upstander spirit, to stand up to every form of hatred, and when given the choice between light and darkness, to always choose the light.

While we remember the law enforcement officers who lost their lives July 7, 2016, our life-giving legacy to honor them is to celebrate the behavior of Upstanders everywhere and to transform Dallas into a City of Upstanders.

Mary Pat Higgins is the president and CEO of the Museum. Email: [mp Higgins@dallasholocaustmuseum.org](mailto:mp Higgins@dallasholocaustmuseum.org).

## LEWIN

continued from p.14

need to clarify that the ultimate goal of Torah study is not simply to accumulate knowledge for oneself, like a philosophy professor that knows everything (in theory) but cares little or does little, but to apply that knowledge.

One may also mistakenly reason that to master any academic discipline requires immersion and seclusion from others, or keeping to like-minded people, those in "my" milieu. Therefore the final clause of the Mishna notes that one must make an extra effort to show a pleasant demeanor to all people.

In the final analysis, one discovers a bidirectional relationship where each of these areas impacts the other. Knowledge leads to experience, action enhances wisdom and interaction with people completes intelligence. The true verdict, however, lies in the last words — the face one presents to the world.

### Presenting a good face

There is an intriguing esoteric idea that relates to this final expression, receiving everyone "with a good face." The Hebrew word for face — *panim* — shares a root with the word "inside." While eyes are the mirror of the soul, to those who can discern, a face is a most complete depiction of one's character, never contradicting the attributes within.

I once heard a saying that until 20 years old, you have the face that God gave you, and after that you construct your own face. As you go through life, you build your face, to the point that were a different soul inhabiting the body, the features would appear

Story idea?

Share yours with us!

Send us your news tips today.

[news@tjnews.com](mailto:news@tjnews.com)  
[www.tjnews.com](http://www.tjnews.com)

**TJP**

TEXAS JEWISH POST ✪ SINCE 1947