

Louis Polovsky

Louis Polovsky was born in New York City, New York in 1919 to Jewish immigrant parents. Their family of four children lived in a small tenement apartment with one bathroom down the hall shared with several families. His father started a small downtown retail drug store where the whole family worked, including the children from an early age.

As young Louis grew, it became obvious that he was more interested in learning than selling shampoo. Nicknamed “the professor” by his peers, he loved to read science fiction and embraced all the futuristic gadgets like radio, airplanes and electronics. He was the only member of his family to start college and attended the College of the City of New York (CCNY) which was free tuition and admitted competitively based on grades only.

After World War II broke out, Louis left college in March of 1942 to enlist in the US Army to serve his country and to fight against those murdering his parents’ brothers and sisters still back in Europe. The Army sent him to school to qualify as a radio mechanic and to learn how to use and fix the complicated and cumbersome communications equipment available at the time.

During training, the Army offered to make him a pair of special prescription eyeglasses to fit in his gas mask. He eagerly ordered them, envisioning some high-tech glasses with special capabilities. They turned out to be ordinary round goggle shaped glasses but proved to have a huge influence on his part in the war. The glasses took longer than expected, and he was not allowed to ship out with his unit. That unit wound up going to a relatively safe island, whereas he found himself a couple weeks later on a crowded troop ship bound for North Africa.

One lucky break he remembered is that to fool any German spies as to the ship’s warm destination, the soldiers were issued sleeping bags. It gets cold at night even in the African desert, and he was always thankful for that simple sleeping bag.

Private First Class Polovsky became part of the new Army Air Forces (the precursor to today’s U.S. Air Force) and worked with airplanes doing radio support as well as defense when his base came under attack. During this time, he was also able to make a short visit to nearby Israel and was thrilled when it

became an independent nation in 1948. After the Egypt-Libya campaign he was reassigned to Italy and participated in the Naples and Rome campaigns. After the final Allied victory in August of 1945, he was honorably discharged. He was a proud United States veteran and always participated in Memorial Day, Veteran's Day and patriotic events.

After entering civilian life, Louis met and married Sylvia and they had two children. He worked most of his life as a radio mechanic for the NYC Board of Education, but continued his love of learning about science, space travel, history, education, music and a variety of topics. In his forties he returned to CCNY to finally get his Bachelor of Education degree at night and graduated at the age of 46 – about 7 years before he watched his daughter graduate in engineering from the same college.

He was active in his town of Rosedale, Queens in New York City and served as President of the Civic Association, frequently leading the fight against airplane noise that plagued the area from nearby Kennedy Airport. For the U.S. bicentennial in 1976, he wrote a short book entitled "The History of Rosedale" which is available in the Queens Public Library.

Louis Polovsky passed away on April 11, 1978 and will always be remembered as a beloved son, husband, sibling and father who loved and took care of his family and his country.

Prepared by his daughter Andrea Mandel, Council Member, West Windsor Township for Memorial Day 2022.



PRIVATE LOUIS POLOVSKY
DECEMBER, 1942

