

## United States Senate Hosts Jewish American Heritage Month Celebration; Presents Project Witness With Historic Award

DEBORAH SCHECHTER

On Wednesday afternoon, May 25, an historic event attended by a significant number of senators and dignitaries took place in the imposing Kennedy Caucus Room of the Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill — a chamber that has served as the venue for numerous memorable occasions and historic hearings about Supreme Court nominations, the sinking of the *Titanic*, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Watergate Hearings, and the Iran-Contra Hearings, to name just a few.

On May 25, the United States Senate celebrated Jewish American Heritage Month by officially recognizing several outstanding Jewish Americans who have greatly enriched the fabric of American life.

On this occasion recognition was accorded to Project Witness and Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein for the signal accomplishments of Project Witness. Without a doubt, this event, which took place close to the seat of government in majestic surroundings, replete with marbled walls, Corinthian pilasters, and a richly detailed ceiling, proved that the determination and tenacity with which Mrs. Lichtenstein and Project Witness have pursued the goal of Holocaust remembrance have enabled it to reach far beyond its humble beginnings.

Together with four other prominent Jewish activists and entrepreneurs, Mrs. Lichtenstein and Project Witness were honored by the United States Senate as part of Jewish American Heritage Month. By receiving such an honor, Project Witness and Mrs. Lichtenstein have brought the memory of the six million victims of the Holocaust to the halls of Washington — the long-awaited result of sheer determination to make sure that their ordeals will never be forgotten.

Among the honorees were:

- Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman of Chamah was born in Kharkov, Ukraine. When simply being a Jew posed a grave danger, Rabbi Zaltzman joined and strengthened the Chabad underground whose mandate was to keep Judaism alive in the crosshairs of the KGB by carrying out missions throughout the Soviet Union. Rabbi Zaltzman immigrated to the U.S. in 1974.

In his widely acclaimed literary work, *Samarkand, The Underground's Far-Reaching Impact*, Rabbi Zaltzman transports the reader to times gone by, describing in vivid detail the fascinating story of the self-sacrifice of a small group of Jews who bravely fought the mighty, brutal Soviet



Placards listing Senate Honorees at the entrance to the Kennedy Caucus Room.



L-R: President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate Orrin Hatch, Mr. Ezra Friedlander, Mr. J. Morton Davis, honoree.



L-R: U.S. Senate Orrin Hatch; Ambassador Norm Eisen; Mr. Ezra Friedlander (standing); Mr. Greg Rosenbaum, MC; U.S. Senator Cory Booker (speaking); NYS Assembly Member Phil Goldfeder; Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman; Mr. Thomas Corby.

regime, and prevailed.

- Thomas B. Corby, President of the LA based Erwin Rautenberg Charitable Foundation, whose support is a major force behind the

humanitarian work of various organizations. His generous, tireless support has turned around the lives of thousands.

- J. Morton Davis, owner and

Photo Credits: Dov & Shmuel Lenchevsky

Chairman of D.H. Blair Investment Banking Corp. The over 400 companies for which he has raised more than \$3 billion have created countless jobs and have added exciting new products including breakthrough drugs, unique electronics, and telecommunications products.

For those of us privileged to attend, the sense of *Kiddush Hashem* that this event generated was uplifting. To hear senator after senator acknowledge the suffering of the Holocaust victims and to witness one of our own receive such a significant honor made us feel a sense of satisfaction that finally the voices of the past are being heard.

To celebrate the tribute to American Jewry that this event marked, an impressive group of senators joined the celebrations and spoke eloquently about the contributions of the honorees. The senators' warm words about the Jewish community were well-received by a large and diverse audience from many segments of the Jewish world. It was obvious from the senators' words that each of them recognized the positive involvement of American Jews in building this country and fighting for American values.

But it was also clear that they recognized the suffering that Jews have endured in the past, especially during the Holocaust, and the cudgels that Jews have taken up on behalf of social justice and ensuring that such disastrous situations never arise in the United States.

Being awarded the Jewish Heritage Month Award from the United States Senate now squarely places Holocaust remembrance and Project Witness on the map of social and legislative conscience.

The words of Senators Orrin Hatch of Utah, Cory Booker of New Jersey, Jean Shaheen of New Hampshire, Ben Cardin of Maryland, Tim Kaine of Virginia, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, and Al Franken of Minnesota, all echoed the same messages. Each of the speakers stressed the significance of the Jewish contribution to the world in general and to the United States in particular. Each senator spoke with deep appreciation concerning what Jews have added to this country and praised the significant contributions of the honorees.

It was amply clear that the honoring of Project Witness raised the consciousness of some of the best-known lawmakers of this great country to the significance of what has to be done and proved to them the power that our small nation has to inspire and to transmit messages of faith and hope to future generations despite almost