

Decades of Perseverance for Wallenberg Culminate At Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony

BY NORA GUTEKANST

Washington, DC - July 9 marked the 70-year anniversary of Raoul Wallenberg's arrival in Budapest in 1944 to begin a rescue mission that would result in his saving 100,000 Jewish lives.

It was exactly on that day, as the Congressional Gold Medal was presented to Wallenberg, that culminated the final chapter of a three-year-long effort to honor and commemorate his memory. With the presence of the U.S. Congress, Wallenberg family members, Swedish government officials who gathered to honor Wallenberg, and in the presence of descendants of people who had been saved by him. Wallenberg's sister, Nina Lagergren, accepted the medal on his behalf.

In January of 1944, the U.S. Treasury Department with the financial support of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) established the War Refugee Board, which sent Wallenberg on his mission of saving the remnants of Hungarian Jewry in Nazi-occupied Budapest. Among other heroic actions, Wallenberg became famous for distributing to thousands of Hungarian Jews a Swedish *Schutz-Pass*, which conferred upon them official Swedish protection thus preventing the Germans from deporting them to concentration camps.

Unfortunately and tragically, the fate of Raoul



Credits Dov Shmuel Lenchevsky

Peter Rebenwurz, chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, holding a painting of Raoul Wallenberg that was drawn by Peter Malkin over a map of Hungary. Mr. Malkin is the Mossad agent who captured Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi Colonel in charge of deporting Hungarian Jewry, and brought him to justice in Israel.

accounts of his possible fate over the decades but none has

Wallenberg Foundation, which spearheaded the effort

International Wallenberg Foundation and featured the

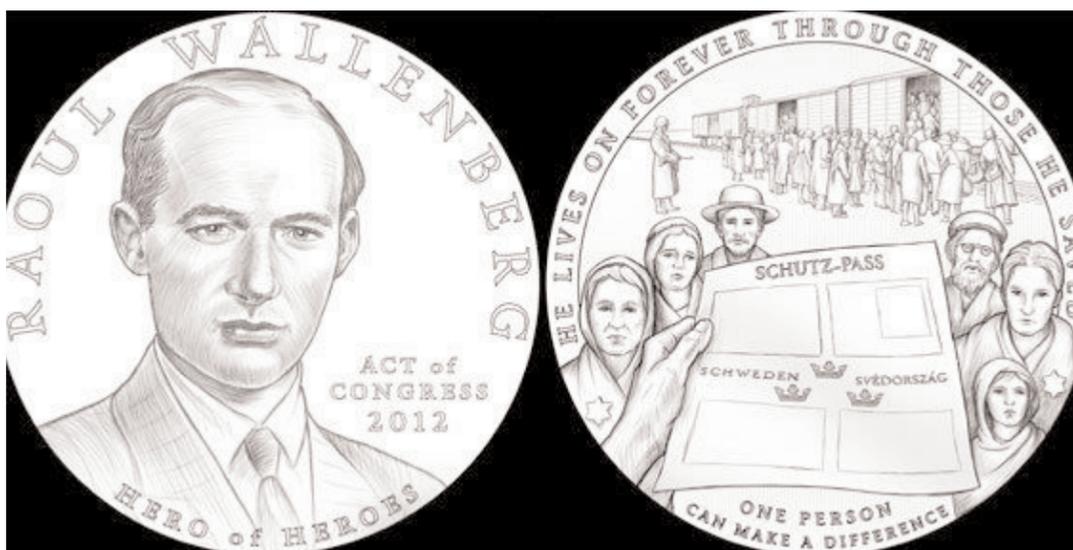
Pittenger, Harper, Schakowsky, as well as U.S. Treasurer Rios. They all acknowledged Nina Lagergren and members of the Wallenberg family who flew in from Sweden along with the Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, Per Weterburg and Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt. All paid tribute to Wallenberg's heroism and honored as well the memory of the late Guy von Vardel, Wallenberg's half-brother, who spent much of his life trying to discover Wallenberg's fate.

Project Witness and its director Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein were acknowledged for trailblazing efforts to educate the Orthodox Jewish community about the Holocaust in general and the spiritual heroism component in particular that is often overlooked.

The luncheon turned out to be the perfect beginning for a day of honoring Raoul Wallenberg's legacy.

The ceremony in the afternoon included the participation of Speaker John Boehner, Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Senate Majority Leader Reid, Republican Leader McConnell, and Democratic Whip Hoyer.

Directly following the ceremony, there was a brief reception to close out the events with a special presentation by NYS State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver to honor Peter Rebenwurz who was the



The actual Congressional Gold Medal designed and struck by the US Mint. Text of "He lives on forever through those he saved" was written by Peter Rebenwurz, Chairman, Wallenberg Commission and summarizes the feelings of everyone who participated at the ceremony.

Wallenberg remains a mystery. In early 1945, he had tried to contact the Soviet Union in an attempt to obtain food for the Jews he was still protecting in Hungary. Wallenberg left for a meeting with Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, a Russian commander, accompanied by his driver, but never returned. There have been unclear

ever been confirmed. The commemoration of Wallenberg began in 2011 with the creation of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission (RWCCC) by Ezra Friedlander, under the chairmanship of Peter Rebenwurz, in collaborative partnership with the International Raoul

to honor Raoul Wallenberg with a Congressional Gold Medal during his centennial. The legislation which was introduced by Representatives Gregory Meeks and Nan Heyworth and by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand unanimously passed in 2012 — the year of his centennial.

A luncheon before the ceremony honored the

participation of Senators Cruz, Gillibrand, Kirk, Cardin, Graham, Levin, Isakson, Franken, Blumenthal, and Representatives Meeks, Schneider, Paulsen, Van Hollen, McDermott, Hultgren, Goodlatte, McGovern,

chairman of the RWCCC and whose father-in-law, Alexander Herman, was actually saved by Raoul Wallenberg.

Rep. Chaka Fattah and Rep. Paul Gosar made remarks

Continued on page C39

A Lesson in *Hakaras Hatov*

What went on at the event in Washington last week was a true lesson in *hakaras hatov*.

Mrs. Nina Lagergren, a noble woman well into her nineties, traveled to Washington from Sweden with members of her family to attend the event honoring her half-brother, Raoul Wallenberg.

In her articulate address, she eloquently thanked the United States Congress and government, individuals, and organizations for being so involved in honoring her vanished brother. But that was not the main focus of her speech. She emphasized the fact of how meaningful

it was that they never gave up the extensive efforts to try to find information about what happened to him.

As Jews, it was a strong lesson in appreciation for us to absorb. Seventy years after a young Swedish diplomat risked his life to save 100,000 Jews in Budapest the United States government put in tremendous effort in an emotional and inspirational event to honor him.

As children and grandchildren of survivors, how much more so does such an event obligate us?

Ruth Lichtenstein



At the reception following the Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony in the U.S. Capitol with members of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission. (L-R): Congressman Chaka Fattah; Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Associate Dean Simon Wiesenthal Center; Stanley Treitel; Rabbi Yitzchok Fleisher, U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad; Dr. David Moskovits, President of the Endowment for Democracy in Eastern Europe; Peter Rebenwurzel, chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission; NYS Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver; Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group; Leon Goldenberg; Joseph B. Stamm; Rabbi Elie Abadie; William Nussen; Ben Hoffman; NYS Assemblymember Phil Goldfeder.

Continued from page C38

along with members of the Wallenberg family and Annette Lantos, the wife of the late Rep. Tom Lantos, who was also saved by Wallenberg.

“Having millions of people witness Wallenberg receive the Congressional Gold Medal 70 years to the day[after] he arrived in Budapest was a *kiddush Hashem* ([sanctification of G-d’s name] and an opportunity for the

world to see both survivors who were saved by Wallenberg as well as descendants of those he saved gather in Washington for no other purpose than to say thank you in the presence of Wallenberg’s sister Nina,” said Peter

Rebenwurzel who chairs the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission established by Ezra Friedlander, CEO, The Friedlander Group, which advocated for the bill’s passage.

New Hope for Students That Struggle: The Pathway Study Center, Inc.

BY GOLDIE ROSENBLUM

Esty was filled with enthusiasm on the first day of school. This year would be different. This year she would not be the last one to be called upon to read. This year she wouldn’t feel left out of classroom discussions. This year she would be learning at her own pace and not be lagging behind her classmates. This year she would not be socially isolated, because her teachers would smile at her and empower her to succeed. This year would be very different. She was going to the Pathway Study Center.

At Pathway, teachers and therapists enable the student to develop critical thinking, stronger memory, and efficient language usage. These crucial cognitive skills open a whole new vista of learning and inferring of information, affording the student a lifetime of opportunity.

The Pathway Study Center, Inc., is a transitional school for students from first through eighth grade who are challenged with language-based learning difficulties, including auditory and/or language processing ones, and dyslexia. An individualized, reconstructive approach to learning is offered using current, research-based techniques. Multisensory methods, including the scientifically-proven Orton-Gillingham approach, provide a stimulating and rewarding educational process. Alternative methods and modalities address the needs of the whole child.

As students discover their extensive abilities for achievement, they become partners in their own growth. Character and interpersonal associations flourish, fostering feelings of confidence and security. Self-esteem soars. Having developed their potential, students can then successfully return to a mainstream school.

Providing skills essential for learning, Pathway Study Center, Inc., implants a love for *Yiddishkeit* in the hearts and minds of young students. Our sacred *mesorah* comes alive as a rich and vibrant experience. Recognizing the need for a program such as this, Pathway has been warmly endorsed by a broad spectrum of leading Rabbanim and *mechanchim*. *b’derech Yisrael Saba*. There is a Bais Yaakov for girls and a separate yeshivah for boys.

Far too many children struggle with language-based learning difficulties, jeopardizing their success in school and beyond. By helping students overcome this challenge, Pathway Study Center, Inc., hasn’t just opened another school; it has opened a pathway to a promising future.

Pathway Study Center, Inc., has relocated to a larger facility in the heart of the Flatbush section of Brooklyn and is now accepting applications for the 2014/2015 school year. For information about Pathway, or the after-school tutoring program, call 718-887-6030 or 347-313-3452, or e-mail us at info@pathwaystudycenter.org.

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