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From left to right: David A. Harris, Executive Director, The American Jewish Committee, Dr. Arthur F. Kirk, Jr., President, Saint Leo University, Rabbi A. James Rudin, award recipient, Andrew Maass, Executive Director, FL West Coast Chapter, The American Jewish Committee, Morton & Carol Siegler, Dinner Co-Chairs

Rabbi A. James Rudin

2007 Eternal Light Award Acceptance Speech

Marcia and I feel like country bumpkins tonight. After all, we live on Sanibel, a small island in the Gulf of Mexico a hundred miles south of here. There are only 6,000 permanent residents, so for us to be in Sarasota with its stop lights, four- and six-lane roads, and many tall buildings is a bit unnerving.

Indeed, the only time we see a crowd such as this on Sanibel is when tourists walk the beach looking for shells or when residents protest the possibility of a fast food restaurant coming to our island.

Marcia and I are pleased that our daughter Jennifer is here, taking just a few hours off from movie making on location in New Orleans. She returns to her work tomorrow on a 7 a.m. flight. Jennifer is the Disney casting director in Burbank, California. Thank you, Jen.

Her sister Rabbi Eve could not be with us because she is in Philadelphia supervising the convention of the North American Federation of Temple Youth. I asked Eve: "It's your choice... a chance to have a great meal and see your father receive an award, or to spend three days with 1200 teenagers

in a hotel in cold Philadelphia." Marcia, why did we teach our children to be such dedicated hard workers? Where did we go wrong?

Next Sunday is Oscar night. But for me, this is my Academy Award, and I am grateful to the selection committee.

But without Marcia's constant love, her continuing support and understanding of my interreligious efforts, I could never be standing here tonight.

I also want to acknowledge the presence of my sister-in-law, Nan Rudin of Alexandria, Va. Nan has known me longer than any one else here; in fact she attended my high school graduation. Joining Nan is Syd Manekofsky, who was a prominent leader in the Soviet Jewry movement in Washington, DC some years ago.

Oscar winners spew forth a list of folks who made their awards possible. I, too, have a list of people who make this night special, and I will briefly albeit rapidly thank each one in alphabetical order.

(continued.)

(continued from page 1)

Shula Bahat, the Associate Director of the American Jewish Committee.

Jane Bracken, our Center's Administrative Associate.

Tom Buckridge, our Center's Interim Director.

Father Michael Cooper, my colleague as a Center spiritual adviser.

Bishop Frank Dewane, the new leader of southwest Florida's Catholics.

Eileen Donovan, a prominent Catholic leader in southwest Florida.

Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, the United States Interreligious Director of the American Jewish Committee.

David and Giuletta Harris. David is the Executive Director of the American Jewish Committee.

Dr. Arthur Kirk, the President of Saint Leo University.

Andrew and Ruthie Maass. Andy is the President of the American Jewish Committee's Southwest Florida Chapter.

Edda Post, the Chapter's Executive Director.

Douglas Renfroe and Lorraine Murphy-Renfroe, the Cantor and Music Director of Congregation Bat Yam on Sanibel.

Carol and Mort Siegler, the Co-Chairs of tonight's Eternal Light Dinner.

Paul Sper, our Center's Treasurer.

Linda Taggart, our Center's Program Director.

And it is only the alphabet that causes me to mention her last, Gail Whiting, our Center's Chair.

And to Rabbis Gary Klein and Michael Eisenstat, and Father Len Petrowski, and all the other Center Board members who are here. Thank you all.

I have always been attracted to pioneers...men and women who took chances and shattered traditional borders, boundaries, and beliefs.

People who achieved breakthroughs in all fields of human endeavor...medicine, science, space, sports, education, music, literature, theater, dance, civil and human rights, politics, and religion.

Pioneers who faced skepticism, ridicule, travail and pain, but who ultimately triumphed and who, through their efforts, are forever part of our collective memory bank.

And, more specifically, I have always admired the "halutzim," (the Hebrew word for pioneers), the men and women who drained swamps, planted crops, vineyards and forests, created new communities and became a decisive force in the creation of the modern democratic State of Israel that you and I love so much.

In all cases, the pioneers in every field, halutzim, not only transformed their physical and psychological environments, and, this is the key point, the pioneers were themselves transformed by their efforts.

I strongly believe that we, you and I, are also pioneers, halutzim, in the work of building new human bridges of mutual understanding and respect between Christianity and Judaism, between Christians and Jews, and we, too, are transformed by our efforts.

And our work is just that...a pioneering effort.

Remember, it has only been 42 years since the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council's "Nostra Aetate" Declaration and the Catholic Church's extraordinary effort to develop new positive relations with the Jewish people. It has only been 21 years since Pope John Paul II, in a pioneering moment, visited the Great Synagogue of Rome and declared to the entire world the Jewish covenant with God is eternal and "irrevocable"

It has only been 13 years since the Vatican and Israel established full and formal diplomatic relations. And it is only seven years since John Paul II visited Israel, an event in which I was fortunate enough to take part.

And it has been less than two years since the German-born Pope Benedict XVI visited the synagogue in Cologne.

And here in Florida it is only 9 years since the founding of our Center, the only such Center south of Baltimore, and our Center, as you have heard, grows from strength to strength. Our Center serves the rapidly increasing—exploding is a more accurate term—number of Jews and Catholics who are moving to Florida's West Coast...from Tarpon Springs in the north to Naples in the south...we are truly living in a time that is a "pioneering moment."

For nearly forty years, I have been privileged to be an active participant in the historical pioneering changes that are currently underway between Jews and Catholics. Thanks to my beloved American Jewish Committee, and now the Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies, a collaboration between the AJC and Saint Leo University, I consider myself one of the halutzim, the pioneers, in reversing the lachrymose history between our two faith communities.

I am sustained in that pioneering effort by the Hebrew prophet Zachariah who taught us to be "prisoners of hope," asiray ha-tikvah. I am sustained by the love of family, friends, and colleagues. And I am sustained by the support of the people who are here tonight.

You, like I, have been given something that previous generations never had, the opportunity to be part of one of the great success stories of history: the building of mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual knowledge between Catholics and Jews, between Christians and Jews.

It is in that spirit that I accept this wonderful award. I close with the words from Robert Browning's poem, "Rabbi ben Ezra." The subject of Browning's poem was great 12th century Jewish sage and scholar.

You will surely remember the poem's opening lines: "Grow old along with me; the best is yet to be."

Thank you very much.

-Rabbi A. James Rudin

CCJS Book Donations to SLU Library Put to Good use

Sister Dorothy Neuhofer, O.S.B., of Saint Leo University's Cannon Memorial Library, sends along the following good news: "Shortly after CCJS donated the first batch of books on Jewish topics, one of the reference librarians was reviewing a cart of newly cataloged titles. Several of the books CCJS had donated were on the cart and caught the attention of one of the students who was passing by. The student was delighted at what he saw and exclaimed that the titles on Jewish topics were 'just what he was looking for!' Happily, he was allowed to check out the books even before they were shelved in the stacks." To date CCJS has donated more than 300 books and videos to the Cannon Memorial Library. For additional information regarding book donations, please contact CCJS staff.

Reflections from the Dinner Co-Chairs



"Thank you to all our donors!" The Eternal Light Dinner Report

We are pleased to report that our Eternal Light Dinner (ELD) held in Sarasota on Sunday evening, February 18, was as successful as we could have hoped. In no small part was that success created by our honoree, Rabbi A. James Rudin.

The cooperation and enthusiasm of each member of the ELD committee in generating the pre-event publicity created the turn-out and financial success of the evening. Our volunteer Interim Director, Tom Buckridge, was outstanding in coordinating the process. We are in his debt.

One hundred eighty people attended the event, and we raised a sum greater than that generated from any prior dinner. More importantly, the comments from our guests were, without exception, positive.

All seemed to enjoy the brief presentations of Dr. Arthur F. Kirk, Jr., President of Saint Leo University, David Harris, Executive Director of The American Jewish Committee, Bishop Frank Dewane, the newly arrived Bishop of the Diocese of Venice, and especially the comments of our own Rabbi Jim. The highlight of the evening was the video of the rabbi's life—a complete surprise to Rabbi Jim. Produced with the cooperation of Jim's wife, Marcia, the video included comments from his charming, adorable, six-year-old granddaughter, Emma, whose sparkling eyes captivated all.

A unique spiritual touch was created by all of the clergy present joining the rabbi and priest on the podium for their concluding blessings. That joining of rabbis and priests brilliantly symbolized the success of our Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies inter-religious efforts.

We took great pleasure and pride in co-chairing that special evening!



From left to right: Rabbi Frank Sundheim, Gail Whiting, and Father Len Piowtrowski at the February 7 "Walking God's Paths" Workshop at Tampa's Franciscan Center

"Walking God's Paths" Clergy & Lay Leaders' Workshop

Wednesday, February 7, CCJS was honored to host a workshop at Tampa's Franciscan Center for 17 Jewish and Catholic clergy and lay leaders who expressed an interest in facilitating their own independently organized "Walking God's Paths: Christians and Jews in Candid Conversation" (WGP) interfaith study groups. Guest presenters for the lunchtime meeting included Rabbi Shoshanah Conover, Assistant Rabbi of Tampa's Congregation Schaarai Zedek, Deacon Pat Macaulay, Director of Interreligious Affairs for the Diocese of Venice, and Dr. Joel Kreiss, Board member of the Jewish Center of Venice.

"Walking God's Paths," developed by Dr. Phil Cunningham, director of Boston College's Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, is the acclaimed six session multimedia curriculum

for congregational interfaith dialogue produced in partnership with the National Council of Synagogues and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. Featuring internationally respected scholars and clergy knowledgeable in the field of Jewish Christian relations, WGP has been purchased by hundreds of congregations nationwide. CCJS recommends the WGP program and will provide interested clergy introductory WGP "kits" containing the DVD and a printed copy of the online study guide with facilitator's materials included. For additional information, please see the Boston College website (www.bc.edu/cjlearning) or contact CCJS (www.centerforcatholicjewishstudies.org).



CHAIR reflection

Dear Friends of CCJS:

Once again, the Eternal Light Award Dinner bathed us all in the warmth and love that flows through this unique event. This year we were blessed to honor one of our own: Rabbi Jim Rudin. Rabbi Rudin's contributions to our local Center for Catholic Jewish Studies, as well as to the international cause of Catholic Jewish dialog, are legendary. We are grateful for his contribution to us and to the world.

Kudos to all who made this our most successful event ever! Carol and Mort Siegler did a fabulous job along with their talented and dedicated committee.

Thank you to all involved. We look forward to a wonderful year promoting Catholic Jewish respect and understanding because of your efforts and the generosity of all who supported this year's event.

Gail Whiting

Chair, Center for Catholic Jewish Studies



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Call (352) 588-8597 or
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