

From: **The American Airpower Museum at Republic Airport**
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For immediate release

Liberation of the Nazi death camps memorialized with dedication of American armor at Republic Airport that helped knock down their gates

On the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi death camps one of the American armored vehicles similar to those that broke down the gates and freed remaining survivors was dedicated at the American Airpower Museum at Republic Airport by survivors of the Holocaust and G.I. veterans who participated in liberation.

Also attending were Farmingdale school students, officials from the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County and elected officials wishing to honor the anniversary. The ceremony at Republic Airport included an operational World War II M8 Greyhound armored car use by American troops to find the concentration camps with the museum placing it behind a replica of the concrete posts and barbed wire that became hated symbols of Nazi genocide.

A keynote speaker was Thea Gottesman Rumstein of Levittown, a Viennese native who survived Auschwitz before being transferred to Mauthausen where M8 Greyhounds arrived at the front gate to liberate the camp on May 5, 1945. "The day we were re-born," said Ms. Rumstein to Republic Airport Director Michael Geiger and some 100 people who gathered at the airport to mark the occasion.

The M8 was acquired through the financial support of Lawrence Kadish, Peter Kalikow, Jan Burman, Steven Krieger, Ed Blumenfeld, Donald Rechler, Stanley Silverstein, Gary Melius, Bennett Rechler, Alan Gerry and the family of the late William Lewi.

In a statement, Babylon Town Supervisor Steve Bellone observed that mere words cannot do justice to telling the story of the Holocaust, "There is little I could say that could add to our understanding of what occurred during the nightmare years of the Third Reich. I can only tell those in attendance, those who survived, those who were the liberators – that we will not forget. Not now. Not ever. And when my children are old enough they will be told of this chilling chapter in world history. And they too will be instructed not to forget. Not now. Not ever."

Airport Director Geiger noted. "This is a solemn moment for us but it is also a reminder of just how powerful this venue is as a means of communicating to a new generation about the courage and dedication of Americans who have consistently sacrificed themselves on behalf of freedom. I want to thank our honored guests, both survivors and liberators, and those who have created this tribute."

Nassau County Legislative Presiding Officer Peter Schmitt stated, “I stand before you in recognition that each and every one of us must continue to bear witness – whether we were there or not. Whether our families suffered inside the camps or not. Whether we are Jewish or Christian. It remains a moral imperative that we all continue to stand witness against those who perpetrated the Holocaust.”

Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Venditto explained, “These ceremonies honoring those who liberated camps could not have come sooner. Despite all the means of getting information to virtually every student around the world the lessons of the Holocaust are in danger of being lost in a vast sea of trivia. We stand against that threat and we will continue to recall this murderous chapter in the history of mankind.”

Herman Horowitz was among the liberators of the camps, having come across Normandy, fighting across Europe with Patton’s Seventh Armored Division and participating in the deadly Battle of the Bulge. His unit participated in the liberation of the Ohrdruf and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps and his participation in the ceremonies underscored how their experiences have stayed with them for sixty five years. Mr. Horowitz is a keynote speaker on behalf of the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, located in Glen Cove, Long Island’s premier educational institute that teaches the lessons the Holocaust to fight bullying, prejudice and all forms of intolerance.

Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone embraced the survivors during his remarks, noting, “You survived the unimaginable and honored the victims of the Holocaust by living full and loving lives.”

A unique effort in this dedication program was the unveiling of an illustrated story that chronicles the liberation of the Mauthausen slave camp by a column of M8 Greyhounds. Using original first person recollections, illustrator and artist Jim Hart drew a “comic strip” that will be used as an educational tool at schools throughout the region and in cooperation with the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center. He called his research into the drawing “haunting” but he has produced a “comic” that reaches its intended audience, school students, who are so often overloaded with digital information that they can miss the compelling stories they need to truly understand in order to absorb their history lessons. Liberating the survivors of the Holocaust is one of them.

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Photo captions – Republic Airport Director Michael Geiger welcomes the audience during ceremonies at the airport’s American Airpower Museum marking the liberation of Nazi death camps.

Middle school students from the neighboring Farmingdale school system are riveted by stories of heroism, inhumanity and survival during the Holocaust program at the airport.