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## Politicos, community leaders, FDNY and NYPD gather for Holocaust survivor's new book

by CAROL ANN BENANTI

Community leaders, officers of the NYPD and FDNY and some of the Island's political leaders gathered in the Eltingville home of Rabbi Romi Cohen, a Holocaust survivor, businessman and philanthropist, to celebrate his new book, "The Ribnitzer Rebbe."

This was his second publication, inasmuch as 18 years ago, Rabbi Romi published "The Youngest Partisan," an autobiography that focuses on the Holocaust years when he was a hunted fugitive and a valiant fighter who survived the Nazis after losing his mother, two sisters and two brothers to a concentration camp.

Mendy Mirocznik, president of the Staten Island Council of Jewish Organizations, served as master of ceremony and introduced Rabbi Yaakov Lehrfield, senior Rabbi of Young Israel of Staten Island who offered the blessing during the program.

"We applaud Rabbi Romi Cohn's for his heroic military service as a partisan during World War II," Mirocznik said. "But Romi's passion for social justice did not end with the conclusion of the war. It continued with his activism for civil rights and his mission in fighting hate, bigotry and anti-Semitism. To his credit, Romi has not remained silent and had memorialized his wartime experiences in the 'Youngest Partisan.' What is even more remarkable is that, at age 90, Romi has just published his second book, 'The Ribnitzer Rebbe.' "

Among the many other speakers, Lori Weintrob, professor and director of the Holocaust Center at Wagner College, recounted scenes from the life of the Ribnitzer Rebbe that demonstrate the Rebbe's understanding that "the world must know that God is in charge," and that this understanding should shape every aspect of a person's life.

Leonard Ciaccio, professor at the College of Staten Island, spoke of the celebration of a righteous man. "Romi Cohn's role as a witness to the process that allows evil to attack the human condition and about the power of goodness and holiness to safeguard our welfare is demonstrated in his two books, 'The Youngest Partisan' and 'The Ribnitzer Rebbe.' "

Assemblyman Charles Fall pointed out that hate for one group becomes hate for all and therefore communities must come together to resist hate and create a peaceful and productive world.

Chief Kevin Woods, Staten Island FDNY borough commander, drew parallels between the horrors of the attack on the World Trade Center and the witness of the horrors of the Holocaust

provided by Romi Cohn and he noted the importance of the phrase, “We must never forget,” when communities are attacked by mindless evil.

Angela Olsen of the JCC, brought greetings from New York State Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis. She explained that Ribnitzer Rebbe provided an inspiration for all people to persevere with sincere faith and hope.

James Kelly of the Richmond County Foundation thanked Cohn for his life’s work, stressing the importance of the Ribnitzer Rebbe as a witness to the power of true holiness.

Romi Cohn addressed the crowd. With a moving recollection of his motivation to honor the Ribnitzer Rebbe, Romi reminded his assembled friends of how much he learned about goodness and faith and the need to live every moment in the service of the Lord. He stressed the writing of this book was extremely difficult and that he often worried he might not do an acceptable job in conveying the profound holiness of the Rebbe. He concluded his remarks by thanking all who helped him reach this life defining goal and wished all the blessings of the Rebbe.

The celebration concluded with the friends of Romi Cohn joining in the singing of “God Bless America” and “America the Beautiful” with the pipers and drummer from the New York City Police Department: Stephen Crockett, Charles Zaleski, Robert Conwell and Thomas Rossiter.