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HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR THANKS LIBERATORS BY FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR A NEW GENERATION OF SURVIVORS

(Mahwah) – In 1949, Holocaust survivor Josef Ross, then a teenager, promised himself that he would one day thank those who had liberated him and give back to his adopted country in a meaningful way. Now a successful businessman and resident of Fort Lee, NJ, Ross plans to make good on his promise.

On Wednesday, August 18, he and his wife, Roz, will announce that they are endowing a scholarship that provides funding for college expenses (up to full funding of tuition, room and board for up to four years) to educate children of members of the United States military who perished while serving their country during the current conflicts. Known as the **Ross Family Survivor to Survivors Scholarship**, the \$250,000 endowment will provide funding for the survivors to attend Ramapo College of New Jersey. The program is open to students throughout the country.

Josef A. Ross was born in Skarzysko, Poland. In the fourth grade, his primary education in the local public school abruptly came to an end with the German invasion of September 1939. The rest of his youth coincided with the horrific years of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. Confinement to ghettos led to deportation to concentration and forced labor camps. On May 9, 1945, he was finally liberated from Terezin (Theresienstadt) Concentration Camp, located in today's Czech Republic. Like many young people in his situation, he spent the next few years pulling together the threads of his life. After returning to his native Poland to find his family and community almost entirely obliterated, he managed to get to Western Germany, where he lived for a time in a displaced persons camp.

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Finally, in December 1949, he came to the United States and eventually settled in New York City. Having already received some vocational training, he was able to obtain a job as a mechanic in a luggage factory. Excelling at his work, he rose through the ranks and within a relatively short time, became the plant manager. Seven years later, he founded his own luggage manufacturing business.

In between, as he describes it, he married his dear wife, Roz, and had two lovely daughters. While maintaining an active personal and business life, Ross also managed to contribute his talents and energy to a number of communal and trade organizations. He was the first president and founder of the Skarzysko Society, a non-profit fraternal organization for the survivors of his hometown; he became a member of the prestigious Prime Minister's Club of Israel Bonds; and he was an active member of the Luggage and Leather Goods Association and the National Association of Sporting Goods.

He and Roz also founded the American Stage Company, a not-for-profit regional stage company that, for a number of years, was based at Fairleigh Dickinson University. Additionally, he has been a member of the board of the Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies at Ramapo College from its inception, a member of the President's Council of the World Jewish Congress and an active supporter of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Last year, after half a century of hard work and success, Ross decided to "slow down" and liquidate most of his investments. "As much as I enjoyed 50 plus years of satisfactory work, with positive results, it gives me even more pleasure and satisfaction to be able to help these young deserving kids to receive the good education that I was deprived of," explains Ross.

The August 18 announcement will take place at Ramapo College of New Jersey, beginning at noon in the Trustees Pavilion. Also attending will be legislators and public officials, armed forces personnel and the Ross family and friends.

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