

June 18, 2014

Letter of Thanks from Sam Hamilton to Donors and All Supporters

Dearest friends,

I wanted to thank everyone for supporting my trip to the Canadian Institute of Jewish Research (CIJR) galas in Montreal and Toronto. Words alone can not describe the feelings of accomplishment, pride, and support I felt during my trip.

When I first arrived in Montreal with Sarah, we were picked up by our host **Nathan Elberg (CIJR)**. **Nathan** and his wife **Sandra** opened up their home to Sarah and I, they made us feel as welcome as if we were family. Whether it be making sure we had enough to eat, enough coffee to keep us awake, and taxiing us around Montreal, they took care of us - thank you! The first night in Montreal we met **Professor Krantz**, **Jack Kincler**, and **General Eitan Ben-Eliahu**. What an incredible group of dedicated individuals! **Professor Krantz** started the *Liberal Arts College* at Concordia University and is the director of CIJR. I enjoyed learning about **Professor Krantz's** upbringing in Brooklyn, NY, how he collected money that went towards the purchase of a salvage Czechoslovakian fighter plane used to fight for Israel's independence. **Jack Kincler** is the national chairman of CIJR and fought in the IDF during the Yom Kippur war. He helped "suit up" planes for fighting. **General Eitan Ben-Eliahu** who was a pilot in the Israeli Air Force (IAF) for 38 years, and the 13th IAF Commander-in-Chief, had also fought during the Yom Kippur war and the Operation Pillar of Defense. Sarah and I had the privilege of speaking at the Montreal and Toronto galas with this group of highly respected individuals.

The Montreal gala was the evening of June 10, 2014 at the congregation Shaar-Hashomayim. The room we spoke in was large and filled with distinguished individuals including honouree, Dr. William H. Novick and many Mahalnicks. Mahal is an acronym for the overseas fighters that came to Israel after WWII to fight for Israel's independence. Sarah and I had people coming up and introducing themselves to us; many were aware that we had traveled all the way from western Canada to be there to speak. Dinner proceeded cocktails and before we knew it, it was our time to talk. After watching videos about the heroes who fought for Israel, and listening to the speakers who served in order to ensure the Jewish homeland was protected, it was daunting to stand up and tell these same people what was occurring at University campuses, especially in

regards to our own Jewish community. I calmed my nerves by thinking of an email that I had received from chabad.org that afternoon. The subject of the email was "How I overcame my public speaking anxiety". The email is about someone giving a speech and why it is important to remove yourself from the "equation" and focus on what the lesson conveyed: I was simply the medium, to present the knowledge that I had been blessed to learn. I was to play my role, to do my best, but the success of the program, just as how receptive my audiences would be to these teachings, was really not in my hands at all. 'There was a bigger Programmer orchestrating it all'. And boy oh boy was the audience receptive! The speech went smoothly and the audience felt what we felt and gave us what we lacked from our Federation: support. People applauded us when we finished and immediately were approaching us looking to help us, and join us. When I had a Mahalnicks come up to me, hold my hands, and look me in the eyes and say, "I have fought, but now you are fighting keep on going, you are my hero", it was enough to make me tear up. These are my heroes, people that go out and make a difference, people like Sarah and members of CUWI, the members of the Mahalnicks and IDF, people who stand up against the crowd and fight for what they believe in. It could not have gone more perfectly!

The next morning we flew from Montreal to Toronto on a smaller plane. Sarah and I were together with the rest of the delegates, **Professor Krantz, Jack Kincler**, and, **General Eitan Ben-Eliahu**. The flight was a little too exciting for me - I was VERY happy to land in Toronto. It was a lunch time engagement this time held at the regiment in a beautiful room dedicated to the highlanders. Once again I had the privilege of meeting Mahalnicks, Holocaust Survivors, leaders of pro-Israel organizations, and many, many more exciting people. As Sarah and I spoke I would glance around the room and look at the many veterans, and survivors, as they listened to what we had to say. It broke my heart to see the upset on their faces. They gave their lives to fight for our safety; many pride themselves with the fact that Israel successfully became a Jewish state. Once again Sarah and I felt support, and strength. We were approached by many more distinguished individuals including, ex-Toronto police chief, now in charge of the Jewish War Veteran Funds, a Jewish student from Ontario, and many activists who are willing to join forces with us. Another successful event. The CIJR galas were put together beautifully and its members' hospitality is unparalleled. Even when I needed a ride to the airport the lovely **Mrs. Doris** personally made sure I arrived safe and sound. I would highly recommend everyone has the privilege of attending a CIJR gala, or have the opportunity to meet/work with this astonishing group of people.

What I take away from this amazing experience was that it doesn't take many people to make a big change. For example, when you look at the Mahalnicks who fought for Israel's independence, there weren't many, 3,500; relative to the amount of people who had fought in WWII this number is not large. It was this group of individuals who had to sneak into Israel to fight (passports were not being issued to the Middle East), because the Jewish homeland depended on them. These were men and women who had already gone through WWII, even the Holocaust, and they still jumped at the opportunity to fight for what they believed in. This is my inspiration; even in the face of unthinkable odds, I know that anything is possible. I will continue to fight for what I believe in.

Thank you everyone for all of your support,
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