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Two Women, A Veteran and a Survivor, Reunited After 60 Years at the Spring Women's Luncheon Benefit for the Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

New York, NY – The Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust held its annual Spring Women's Luncheon Benefit at the Pierre Hotel on June 2, 2005. This year's luncheon brought together two women who last saw each other shortly after the liberation of Dachau in 1945: **1st Lieutenant Charlotte Chaney** and Holocaust survivor **Miriam Rosenthal**. Chaney was a US Army nurse at the 127th Evacuation Hospital in Germany in 1945, who cared for survivors after the liberation of Dachau, and Rosenthal, who survived a number of concentration camps and slave labor camps including Auschwitz, before being liberated at Dachau. Rosenthal, along with her newborn son Leslie, were cared for by Chaney following the liberation of Dachau.

Marie Brenner, writer-at-large at *Vanity Fair*, led an hour-long discussion with the two women that told the remarkable story of how they were brought together for a brief period in 1945. Their stories of bravery and perseverance brought many in the audience to tears, especially as the two women's roles as daughters, mothers, and caregivers came to light.

Charlotte described how distressed her mother was when she announced that she joined the service. "How could you do this to me. I did not have a son to send," was her mother's response. The idea of Charlotte risking her own life to serve in the military during World War II was all the more poignant taken together with Miriam's story and the birth of her son in a concentration camp.

Miriam spoke about the need to feed her baby and the help provided by another woman who had also recently given birth. "This woman who had so much milk. She was older by five years than I. I was 22. She had so much milk. This is a miracle from God. One miracle after the other. We did not have food. The babies were hungry. She was allowed to stay and we had to go out to work. She was feeding the babies. And, the more she fed the babies, the more milk she had."

About Charlotte Chaney

Charlotte Chaney was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. She graduated as a registered nurse from Beth Israel Hospital in Newark. After enlisting in the US Army in 1943, 22-year-old Chaney arrived in France in January 1945 where her evacuation hospital barely escaped a bombing. On May 3, 1945, she reached the Dachau concentration camp soon after its liberation, where she cared for survivors in the 127th Evacuation Hospital.

After the war, Charlotte and her husband, who had been stationed in Texas, eventually settled in Miami, where she resumed her career as an operating room nurse at Mt. Sinai Hospital. She was married to the late Bernard Chaney for 60 years, and has a daughter, two grandsons, and a great-grandson. Charlotte was joined at the luncheon by her grandson Gary Young, who followed in her footsteps and became a registered nurse.

Charlotte Chaney and 17 other women who served in the military are represented in the award-winning exhibition, *Ours to Fight For: American Jews in the Second World War*, currently on display at the Museum. The exhibit explores and celebrates the achievements of Jewish men and women who were part of the American war effort on and off the battlefield.

About Miriam Rosenthal

Miriam Rosenthal was the youngest of eight brothers and sisters of the Schwarz family in Komarno, Czechoslovakia. In early 1944 as word came of the German occupation of her hometown, Miriam sent a coded message to her fiancé William in Miskolc, Hungary that she was in danger. William sent a messenger with false papers for Miriam to escort her to Miskolc. Miriam was married to William in a secret ceremony shortly after arriving in Miskolc.

In June 1944 William was sent to a distant labor camp, and Miriam was deported to Auschwitz along with the other Jews of Miskolc. She was forced on to a train transport for the three-day trip to Auschwitz, during which the prisoners received nothing to eat, and little to drink. Miriam was sent off to various work camps during her time at Auschwitz. It was during this time that she discovered she was pregnant, a fact that she kept secret from her guards in order to stay alive. Some of the guards did help Miriam by providing her with extra food.

While at a work camp in Augsburg, Germany, Miriam's pregnancy was discovered by two members of the SS. She was supposed to be sent back to Auschwitz, but it was already being bombed by the Russians. Instead she was sent to Kaufering, where she was put together with six other pregnant women. Together they worked in the laundry and helped each other through their pregnancies. Leslie, Miriam's son, was born in a sub camp of Kaufering, part of the Dachau administration.

Eventually the camp was evacuated and Miriam and the others were sent to Dachau. They arrived at night and the next day the camp was liberated by the Americans. Following the war, Miriam and her son were reunited with her husband in Komarno. It was not until they were reunited that William even knew Miriam had been pregnant with his child.

Life after the war took Miriam and her family back to Miskolc before moving on to Paris, Cuba, New York and finally in June 1947 to Toronto, Canada where she lives today with her husband of 61 years.

About the Spring Women's Luncheon Benefit and the Museum

The co-chairs of this year's event were Carol Case and Kathy Gantz, and Museum Trustees Patti Kenner and Ann Oster.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, located at 36 Battery Place in Battery Park City, uses a core exhibition of more than 2,000 historic photographs, 800 historical and cultural artifacts, and 24 original documentary films to educate people of all ages and backgrounds about the broad tapestry of Jewish life over the past century-before, during, and after the Holocaust. The Museum develops special exhibitions and public programs to examine more closely specific areas of Jewish history and heritage. The Robert M. Morgenthau Wing contains the state-of-the-art Edmond J. Safra Hall, Andy Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones*, catering hall, classrooms, and expanded gallery space for special exhibitions. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. The Museum is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*. For more information, visit www.mjhnyc.org or call (646) 437-4200.

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