

**Remarks by Sam Pesin, president of The Friends of LSP
and son of the late Morris Pesin, the father of Liberty State Park
June 25, 2011**

Welcome everyone. I want to thank David English for organizing this special reunion program. I also want to thank LSP and JC for their cooperation.

26 years ago, my father Morris Pesin welcomed Lady Liberty's Marines and accepted their donation check to restore Lady Liberty. As Morris Pesin's son and as the president of The Friends of LSP, it is a tremendous honor to thank and congratulate the Lady Liberty Marines on their significant achievement. These Marines are an amazing group of Americans.

Their dedication to the Statue's Restoration and to our great nation is very inspiring.

Their 610 mile fundraising relay marathon is a patriotic story about young Marines, on the eve of being sent to the Middle East, who wanted to help restore Lady Liberty, the world's greatest symbol of freedom and democracy.

It is heartwarming to share this day with my mother Ethel, my sister Judy, Judy's husband Lou Borriello, a proud Marine veteran, and with all of you.

With Lady Liberty's 125th birthday on Oct. 28, it is the right time for this previously unheralded Marathon, rooted in the passionate love of our country and devotion to the Statue's Restoration, to be recognized as a special story in our nation's history. The Marines carried out their goal with perseverance and exemplified the true Spirit of America. The determined striving of this group of runners represents the best of America.

On the United States Marine Corps Seal, the eagle of the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor emblem holds a ribbon emblazoned "Semper Fidelis". Semper Fi, the Marines' motto, symbolizes their commitment to being "always faithful" to protecting our nation, to the mission at hand, to the Marine Corps and to each other. They live by the highest standards of ethics, responsibility, and respect. The Marines tradition of values and their defending our nation since 1775, make us all proud.

The Marines' ability to rapidly respond on short notice to crises gives it a strong role in the implementation of American foreign policy.

Captain Samuel Nicholas formed two battalions of Continental Marines on November 10th, 1775 at the

Tun Tavern in Philadelphia as naval infantry, by a resolution of the Second Continental Congress. The Marine Corps has served in every American armed conflict and attained major prominence in the 20th century when amphibious warfare formed the cornerstone of the Pacific campaign of World War II.

And today, we're honoring a dedicated group of Marines who took the Statue's disrepair to heart and who wanted to make a difference in this country, before going overseas to make a difference.

Don't be surprised if you catch a glimpse of Lady Liberty

turning around this morning and giving a big smile about the reunion. It would have to be a smile instead of a Thumbs Up, because her hands are full with the great torch, and the tablet with our nation's birthday inscribed on it.

Marine Corporal David English's heartfelt initiative had various challenges and the marathoners and logistics coordinator had no modern devices such as cell phones or GPS. When they reached LSP, they presented the check to my father and then quickly returned to North Carolina to begin their deployment back to the Eastern Mediterranean (as part of the 22nd Marine Amphibious Unit).

LSP

Many people see this park as sacred public land because it is Lady Liberty's neighbor. I will briefly describe the transformation of what had been a waterfront wasteland into this beautiful park which was NJ's 1976 Bicentennial gift to our nation. My father's envisioning and spearheading the park's establishment shows that one person can make a real difference - and as with any worthwhile effort, such as with David English's and the marathon, many other people are always needed to make things happen.

My father had allies such as Audrey Zapp, the park's Godmother and also Ted Conrad who was an early pioneer crusader for the park. Also a Jersey City grassroots citizens' campaign played a key role in making the dream of the park a reality.

This land that became LSP was a waterfront wasteland of abandoned railyards - the wreckage of a once-mighty railroad empire - and also a scene of decaying piers and derelict and half submerged ships. It was a junkyard eyesore. The Jersey City shoreline was a shameful and embarrassing backdrop

to the Statue and it was a national disgrace.

The change of this desolate land into a beloved state park has given Lady Liberty and Ellis Island a deserved green, open space neighbor, worthy of these shrines to democracy.

Visiting this park is a meaningful spiritual experience - as people of all cultural backgrounds, religions and colors come here to exercise our God-given unalienable rights to pursue life, liberty and happiness. In this park, one can feel the greatness of our nation's basic truths, that freedom, justice, brotherly love and equality is what the world must have.

The essence of the park's 35 year history is that the public put democracy into action to protect the vision of a free park and defeated many inappropriate commercialization plans.

The title of a Bruce Springsteen song is "Land of Hope and Dreams". Because Liberty Park brings people together and inspires reflection on our country and our own lives, we can call this park a "land of hope and dreams". And today we celebrate the hopes and dreams of the Lady Liberty Marines who made a strong statement about what life is about in carrying out their run to honor Lady Liberty.

Lady Liberty Restoration

I'll speak briefly about the **restoration work** which was completed before the Statue's Centennial Celebration on the weekend of July 4, 1986. After almost a century, weather, pollution, and sightseeing had left Lady Liberty in serious need of repair.

The repairs included replacing the torch with a 24-carat gold leaf-covered skin that is lighted from the outside. Also replaced were 1600 wrought iron bands that hold the statue's copper skin to its frame, and an exhibit was installed in the Statue's base. (The 1980s restoration also included a thorough washing of the Statue's copper skin.)

As we all remember, scaffolding eventually obscured Lady Liberty from her toes to her torch.

A large group of architects, historians, engineers, and almost 1000 laborers completed the Restoration. President Ronald Reagan kicked off his campaign for president on Labor Day, 1980 right on this lawn behind me. He understood the world's need for liberty and when he announced in 1982, the formation

of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission to seek private sector funds, the president asserted that both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island can help us all remember how grateful we should be to live in this land of freedom and good will.

The Commissioners accepted donations as part of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation which had a public private partnership with the National Park Service. The Foundation is still going strong and the American people have contributed in the last 30 years, more than \$600 million to the repair, restoration, and maintenance of these two great monuments to freedom.

At this ceremony today, as we recognize the awesome marathon by Lady Liberty's Marines, let us also thank them and all Marines and all those who have honored and are honoring us today by their military service and in particular, we are forever indebted to those who have given their lives to defend our freedom and uphold our values.

Today, let us all recommit ourselves to the values of our nation. As Americans, we have the responsibility to actively work to carry out the universal truths about liberty and justice that The Statue and her torch stand for.

God bless you all and God bless America.