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Senate Passes Resolution Honoring Holocaust Heroes

WASHINGTON, DC — Honoring the heroism of the late Reverend Waitstill and Martha Sharp, who risked their lives in World War II to save hundreds of people during the Holocaust, the U.S. Senate today passed a resolution offered by U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) recognizing the Sharps' extraordinary work and paying tribute to them as their names are added to the "Wall of Rescuers" in the permanent exhibition of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on September 14, 2006.

Martha Sharp was born in Providence and her husband Waitstill was a Unitarian minister from Wellesley, Massachusetts. Many members of the Sharp family still live in New England, including their daughter, Martha Sharp Joukowsky, a retired Brown University professor who lives in Providence.

In February of 1939, Rev. and Mrs. Sharp left their 2 and 6 year-old sons in the care of family and congregants at the Unitarian Church in Wellesley, MA, to go to Czechoslovakia to provide humanitarian assistance for tens of thousands of refugees crowding into Prague. While there, the Sharps not only assisted these refugees, but worked to assist Jews and other opponents of the Nazi regime to escape to safety elsewhere in Europe. They repeatedly risked their lives by crisscrossing Europe to obtain necessary documents and escorting refugees by train through Germany and the United Kingdom, assisting approximately 2,000 men women and children to escape to freedom.

"It is an honor to pay tribute to Waitstill and Martha Sharp whose courage is truly remarkable. Words cannot express the importance of their work to save so many people during one of the most horrific events ever recorded," stated Reed. "They faced unspeakable danger, and their valor will be remembered for generations to come."

After barely escaping arrest in 1939, the Sharps fled Czechoslovakia and returned to Massachusetts informing others of the terror occurring in Europe. In 1940, they returned to continue their work, eventually establishing the Unitarian Service Committee which was

headquartered in Portugal during the war and continues to serve from its headquarters in Cambridge, MA, today.

On June 13, 2006, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority honored the Sharps in a ceremony in Isreal, with Martha Sharp recognized as the first women to be honored as "Righteous Among the Nations." Waitstill and Martha Sharp's daughter, Martha Sharp Joukowsky, of Providence, Rhode Island, accepted the award on their behalf.

On September 14, 2006, the Sharps will again be honored at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. where their names with be added to the Wall of Rescuers in the permanent exhibition.

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