

Local Civic Leaders Question Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg

Prescott, AZ: A delegation of Prescott-area officials and business leaders, in the nation's capital to preview an educational program offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, had an unexpected opportunity to pose questions after being introduced to United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Friday, March 17, 2006.

The local delegates, who met Ginsburg in the East Conference Room of the United States Supreme Court, were Mayor Rowle Simmons and Police Chief Randy Oaks, City of Prescott; Mayor Harvey Skoog and Police Chief Daniel Schatz, Town of Prescott Valley; Supervisor Carol Springer, Sheriff Steve Waugh, County Attorney Shelia Polk, and Superior Court Judge Robert Brutinel, all of Yavapai County; Yavapai College President Dr. James Horton, local attorney Kenton Jones, and business leaders Ron Fain and Tracey Horn. They were accompanied by trustees of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Prescott - which sponsored the delegates' travel - including Harold Greenberg, president; Dr. David Hess, vice-president, Martin Gottlieb, grants committee chairman; and Pamela Jones, board member.

Hess reports that the impromptu question and answer session was unanticipated. "What we understood would be a very short 'meet and greet' turned into a lively half-hour exchange with Justice Ginsburg," he said. "It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience."

"It was an incredible feeling to stand in the presence of one of the most powerful women in the world," stated local business man Ron Fain. "In addition, the room we met her in was awe-inspiring; beautiful architecture with original oil paintings of past justices. It was a truly memorable experience."

Hess and delegates Brutinel, Jones, and Polk queried Ginsburg about increased pressures from politicians on the Supreme Court - specifically social and political pressures relating to the Court's decisions, in view of recently reported death threats toward Ginsburg; what justices look for when an attorney argues a case before the nation's highest court; and what Ginsburg's passions are, aside from interpreting the law.

"Justice Ginsburg was both thorough and candid in her responses to our questions about her work and the unique stresses that she encounters in upholding her weighty responsibilities. And the final question - about her leisure pursuits - elicited a broad smile," reports Hess. "We learned that she loves opera, attending all performances at the Kennedy Center and most of the

dress rehearsals as well. She's actually quite athletic, enjoying both horseback riding and water skiing."

After attending Harvard Law School, Ginsburg received her LL.B. from the Columbia University School of Law. The path that eventually led to a seat on the Supreme Court was long and difficult for a wife and mother, but Ginsburg's brilliance for the law (she was a law professor at both Rutgers and Columbia) - and her determination to be taken seriously as a practitioner - prevailed. She was a driving force behind the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union in 1971, and she won five of six gender discrimination cases she argued before the Supreme Court. Ginsburg has remained a staunch supporter of both women's and civil rights throughout her tenure on the Supreme Court bench, recently authoring the opinion in *Ring v. Arizona*. It holds that the Sixth Amendment prohibits a sentencing judge to find an aggravating circumstance necessary for imposition of the death penalty, when said judge is sitting without a jury.

The meeting with Justice Ginsburg - the first woman of Jewish faith to be confirmed to the Supreme Court (1993) - held particular significance for the delegates. Earlier in the day, the delegation had experienced a tour of the Holocaust Museum and an overview of the highly acclaimed educational program, **Law Enforcement & Society: Lessons of the Holocaust.**

For more information on Ginsberg and the United States Supreme Court, visit online at www.supremecourtus.gov. To learn more about the Prescott delegation's recent visit to Washington, D.C., visit the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Prescott online at www.jcfdp.org or call the Foundation at 717-0016.

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