

2017-J3728

Senate Resolution No. 3728

BY: Senator BROOKS

CONGRATULATING Walter Schacherl upon the occasion
of celebrating his 100th Birthday

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to commemorate
and recognize certain milestones celebrated by citizens of this great
Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Senior citizens bring a wealth of experience and knowledge
to the increasingly active roles they play in today's society; their
past contributions and future participation are a vital part of, and
valuable asset to, the fabric of community life and activity; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its
long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to
congratulate Walter Schacherl upon the occasion of his 100th Birthday to
be celebrated on Tuesday, February 6, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Walter Schacherl was born on February 6, 1918, in Vienna,
Austria; and

WHEREAS, This remarkable individual has lived the life of a
survivor; as a young Jewish man living in an anti-Semitic time, and
being one of the brightest students in his grade, there was never a
shortage of troubles for him; and

WHEREAS, As Adolf Hitler came to power, Walter Schacherl witnessed his father regularly harassed until his printing press was finally driven out of business; Walter was in his 20s when he first saw Hitler, and he was unimpressed; and

WHEREAS, Being a survivor, Walter Schacherl knew he had to leave Austria; after the Nazis took power, he avoided conscription to the SS because of a hand injury; soon after, he fled Austria, and endured a miserable trip to Greece where he met an illegal transport ship that would take him to Palestine; to evade British patrol boats that were impeding Jewish immigration, Walter jumped overboard and swam to the Tel Aviv shore; and

WHEREAS, After arriving in Palestine, Walter Schacherl lived in Tel Aviv with his older brother; the conditions were not ideal; they lived in one apartment where three people had to share one bed; and

WHEREAS, Walter Schacherl joined his brother in the pressroom of the Haaretz newspaper; he received letters from his parents from home, many bleak from the current Nazi rule; the last letter received from his mother was from a concentration camp in Yugoslavia; he never saw his parents again; and

WHEREAS, With little need of convincing, Walter Schacherl joined the British Army to help take down the Nazis during World War II; he served as a covert cartographer, creating maps of enemy territory; he also served in Egypt and Italy, creating maps that helped the Allied invasion of Sicily; once again, Walter showed his true fighting spirit by not

only surviving a week long coma that was brought on by a mystery illness, but also surviving multiple trips through Nazi-laid minefields; and

WHEREAS, After the war, Walter Schacherl searched for any remaining family members who might have survived the concentration camps; in the end, he could only find a cousin; and

WHEREAS, Returning to Palestine, he continued to work in the pressroom and resumed his hobby of gymnastics, where he would eventually meet his wife, Ryfka, who is also a gymnast; and

WHEREAS, Walter invited Ryfka to a New Year's Eve party in 1946, and 68 years later, they are still together; after dating for three months, the two were married; in that same year, they both witnessed the U.N. General Assembly's separation of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, Walter and Ryfka welcomed their first child, a son named Meir; shortly after his son's birth, Jewish leaders issued Israel's Declaration of Independence, which was followed by a war launched on Israel by five Arab armies; the Israelis won, but Walter lost his brother; and

WHEREAS, 1950 was a better year for the Schacherl family; Walter competed in the Maccabiah Games where he showed his excellent gymnastic abilities and took home a gold medal in the high bar, silver in the rings, and bronze in the side horse; he also received the gold for best gymnast in the all-around. Walter still proudly displays these medals in his home; and

WHEREAS, In 1956, with only \$80 to their name, the Schacherl family moved to Long Beach, New York; Walter and his family stayed with his wife's uncle for two years until they could afford a home of their own; they also welcomed their second child, a daughter named Berta; and

WHEREAS, To learn English, Walter Schacherl used dictionaries, newspapers, and movies; English is one of seven languages he has learned over the years; during their 25 years in Long Beach, the Schacherls fell in love with the city and the country; Walter worked for the Grumman Corporation printing schemas for the Apollo Space program; his son, following his father's example, joined the United States military and served in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Walter Schacherl retired in 1981 at the age of 63, shortly after he and his wife moved to Florida for a short period before returning to Merrick, New York, to live with their daughter; today they are enjoying retirement surrounded by their family which now includes four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Walter Schacherl, who has had a truly amazing life, is a true inspiration to all; his 100 years of life is the embodiment of overcoming hardship, success, love, achievement and determination; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to publicly recognize those who have reached such a remarkable age and who have witnessed and celebrated the innovations, cultural developments and awesome achievements of this country during the last century, while

themselves contributing to the growth and excellence of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Walter Schacherl upon the occasion of celebrating his 100th Birthday; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Walter Schacherl.

