

Smith wins praise for Nazi stance

By DIANE DUBEY
Correspondent

Skokie Mayor Albert Smith was honored Wednesday, Sept. 28, by Temple Beth Israel "for his courageous fight against...prejudice and the menace of hate groups which threaten to destroy our American way of life."

Presented by Sid Kreiman, president of the temple's brotherhood, the brotherhood's annual merit award recognized Smith's "yeoman efforts which have drawn the admiration and applause of freedom-loving people both nationally and abroad."

"He has guided the community against the insidious efforts of a Neo-Nazi group attempting to create physical confrontations which may have resulted in explosive and tragic incidents," Kreiman continued.

Smith was introduced by State Sen. Howard Carroll (D-15) who read letters of praise for the mayor's actions from Judge Seymour Simon and Chicago Cong. Frank Annunzio who were unable to attend.

Currently serving his fourth term as mayor of the largely-Jewish suburb, Smith has staunchly defended the village against the threatened marches and demonstrations by the National Socialist (Nazi) Party of America, a small neo-Nazi organization based in southwest Chicago's Marquette Park area.

Threatened Nazi marches on both May 1 and July 4 were pre-empted by court action.

THE VILLAGE is currently engaged in two lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on behalf of the Nazis, both charging that the village is violating the Nazi's first amendment rights to free speech. An ACLU motion now before the Illinois Supreme Court seeks to overturn an appellate court decision banning the swastika from the streets of Skokie. Awaiting action in Federal District court is an ACLU lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of three Skokie ordinances which prohibit both marches by persons wearing military-style uniforms and the distribution of materials which incite group hatred, and requiring any group seeking a march permit to post a \$350,000 insurance bond.

Of the insurance requirement, which the ACLU calls discriminatory, Smith said "Insurance is obtainable but not by a bunch of thugs and hoodlums. I'm sure it's not available to Nazis—no business is stupid enough to run that risk and no community is so stupid to want that kind of risk."

Smith called the Nazi threat "a village-wide problem" and indicated that he looks to the courts for the answers. "THEY (THE ACLU) sue and we

defend and so far we're staying ahead of them...but once the thugs come to our town, I don't know the answers" he said.

Smith has previously acknowledged that a Nazi march would merely invite violence, particularly from Skokie's 7,000 residents who are survivors of Nazi concentration camps, and he has indicated his distress at the idea of "seeing our police arresting our own citizens."

Skokie's non-Jewish residents have been supportive of the village's efforts in fighting the Nazis—"they feel terrible that this is happening to their neighbors and friends," Smith said. "For every citizen who has criticized our position, another hundred or two-hundred have said, 'Hang in there, Mayor.'"

Just as Smith has gained recognition all over the United States and in other parts of the world (he recently received a letter from Tiperrary, Ireland telling him to "keep up the good work"), another figure has gained even more attention and Smith is greatly bothered by this.

The man is Frank Collin, leader of the small Marquette Park Nazi group, "a punk, a lousy bigot" whose rise to notoriety Smith calls "a defeat for good people."

"IF THERE is something to truly regret in this situation, it is that a man of little talent, little background, and no achievement has gained national recognition, international publicity, and a certain amount of stature," Smith said recently of Collin.

Smith told the 150 people assembled at Temple Beth Israel's Skokie branch, Howard and Crawford, that the Nazi threat in Skokie is part of an international movement of hatred and bigotry against the Jews which received its

most recent boost in the form of the 1975 United Nations resolution declaring that "Zionism is Racism."

"Hatred is the lethal weapon which killed 12 million people in our own time...and everywhere we see evidence of a neo-Hitler cult," he said.

"And the U.N.—what a place to kick off a new war against the Jews," he exclaimed.

Smith called hatred the one weapon which could most hurt world Jewry and ultimately lead to the downfall of the state of Israel. And he called Israel "critical to the survival of the Jewish people."

"If Israel should fall, I don't see how the Jewish people throughout the world would maintain their identity," he said.

BECAUSE OF HIS concern over Israel's survival against threats from Communist, Arab, and third world countries, Smith last year accepted the founding chairmanship of Friends For Israel, a group organized to enlist Christian support for the American Zionist cause.

At the time of the U.N. resolution, Smith said he was "shocked by the hateful act against people who have championed the cause of democracy and justice."

He has since defended the village's position regarding the Nazis before organizations ranging from the Anti-Defamation League to the American Legion and from local synagogues to the Skokie Rotary.

For his overall support of the Jewish community, Smith has received honors and awards from the Janusc Korczak Lodge of B'nai B'rith, the State of Israel Bonds organization, Hadassah, the Skokie Jewish War Veterans, and the Chicago chapter of Magen David Adom.



CITED "FOR HIS COURAGEOUS fight against prejudice" was Skokie Mayor Albert Smith (2d from right) who was presented the Temple Beth Israel brotherhood's merit award Wednesday, Sept. 28. With him are (from left) State Sen. Howard Carroll, Sid Kreiman, president of the temple brotherhood, and Rabbi Ernst Lorge.