

# JNF Highest Award Given Parade Editor Jerry Lewis Toastmaster At Sheraton



Jerry Lewis, toastmaster for the Jewish National Fund tribute to PARADE Magazine editor Walter Anderson, introduces Frederick J. Kleisner, (left) Senior Vice President of the Sheraton Corporation, who made the welcoming remarks.

By Trude B. Feldman  
ISRAELITE'S White House Writer

The scene was New York's Sheraton Centre Hotel. The guest of honor was Walter Anderson, Editor of PARADE Magazine, which has 65 million readers. The toastmaster was comedian Jerry Lewis. The guests at the festive dinner-dance included some of the brightest luminaries from the worlds of publishing and journalism.

The occasion was the presentation of the Jewish National Fund's prestigious 'Tree of Life' award to Anderson in recognition of his "vision and compassion, his commitment to his profession, and to the cause of peace and the sanctity of human life."

Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, in presenting the award, spoke of Anderson's sensitivity to people. He also told of the personal satisfaction he himself derived from his participation in the ceremony.



Elie Wiesel presents 'Tree of Life' award to Walter Anderson, Editor of PARADE Magazine, at New York's Sheraton Centre Hotel. The event made possible the Walter Anderson afforestation project, to be established at the American Independence Park.

The guests of honor's mother, and stepfather; his wife, and children beamed with pride as Anderson accepted the coveted plaque in the presence of 350 leading writers and public personalities, whom the popular editor counts among his good friends.

In his response, Anderson recounted how he had learned of the Jewish National Fund from Elie Wiesel, author of numerous works about the Holocaust.

"I'm genuinely grateful for this award," Anderson said. "It's the highest honor I have received and I will always cherish it. This 'Tree of Life' symbol is important to me because trees represent life, especially in Israel."

The event made possible the Walter Anderson afforestation project, soon to be established at the American Independence Park, outside Jerusalem. (The park was inaugurated in 1976 in celebration of the American Bicentennial. It is a symbol of the friendship between the U.S. and Israel.)

After the presentation, Master of Ceremonies

Jerry Lewis quipped: "It's puzzling to me that with so many Jews in New York, why is Walter getting the prize?"

The answer was given in an interview with Rabbi Joseph P. Sternstein, President of the Jewish National Fund. "The award is given to those who have manifested friendship for the Jewish people and Israel and who are humanitarian in their service to mankind," the rabbi said. "JNF cited Walter because his life reflects the highest attributes of humanitarian idealism."

Rabbi Sternstein recalled that in 1901 Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, launched the Jewish National Fund in Palestine to resuscitate the desert and reclaim the holy land. He explained that the 'Tree of Life' award is symbolic of the fact that the tree has returned life to the land.

In his welcoming remarks, Frederick J. Kleisner, Senior Vice President of the Sheraton Corporation, said that Walter Anderson had taught him the meaning of the word 'volunteerism.'

"Walter's infectious example in contributing his time to worthy causes taught me that the obligation of people -- in both the public and private sector -- is not just bottom line or budget accountability, but rather the further obligation to enfranchise his or her organization or company to the community or society in which we live," he said. "That is volunteerism. By his example, Walter has helped make me a more caring person."

Kleisner has long been active in a number of professional and community organizations and recently received a Citation from President Reagan for his achievements in connections with the President's Private Sector Initiative Program. Kleisner is also the recipient of a Citation of Honor from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Others who paid tribute to Anderson included Jim Hoge, Publisher of the New York Daily News; James Webb, Jr., novelist and former Secretary of the Navy; author Cleveland Amory and literary agent Scott C. Meredith. In musing about Anderson's character, Meredith said, "Walter is always doing good for people for no other reason than the fact that he likes doing good. He often does good in such a way that no one knows about it. He seems to me to be closer to saint status than any other human being I know."

"...As for the 'Tree of Life' award, I'd give him a forest..."

Meredith went on to read a telegram from space scientist and author Carl Sagan: "I'm sorry I won't be able to join in the ceremony honoring

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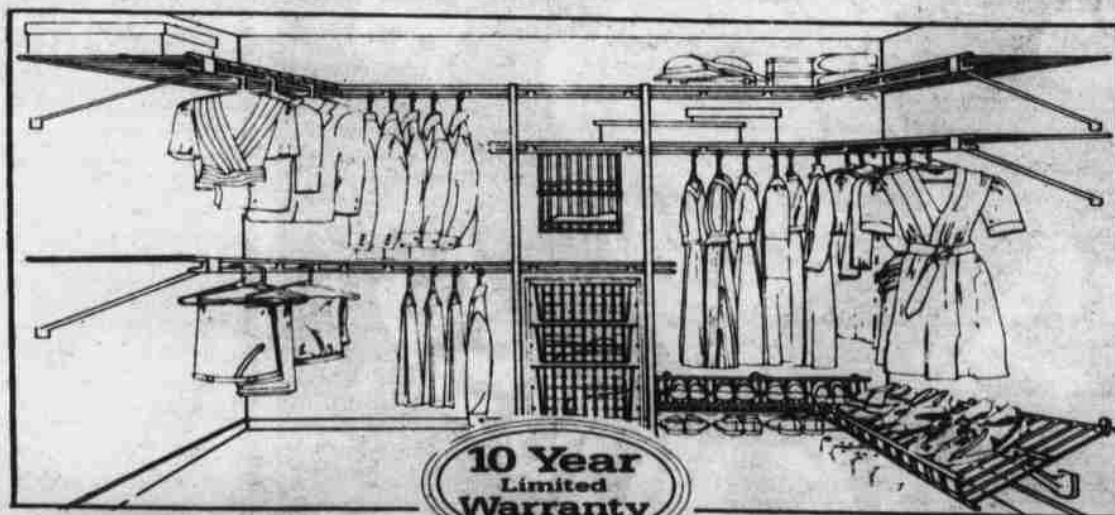
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