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## Pesin recalls his canoe trip

By Robert Larkins

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of his canoe trip from Jersey City to Liberty Island, Morris Pesin recalled how the trip started from an old pier that has since been eliminated by a harbor cleanup.

Then he turned and pointed to the ground at Liberty State Park, where some children were climbing on playground equipment and some were running on the grass, where some people were strolling and others were relaxing at shaded picnic tables.

He recalled how that area had looked on that June day in 1958 when he and Tom Durkin, a Jersey Journal reporter, had taken the canoe trip to dramatize how close the Statue of Liberty was to the Jersey City shoreline.

"It was one big field," Pesin said, "of garbage, litter, derelict boats."

Pesin followed that 1958 boat trip with a call for a state park on that section of Jersey City

waterfront.

It took 18 years (and a 1961 follow-up trip), but the first section of the park was opened to the public June 14, 1976.

"There's a point in life," Pesin, 71, said yesterday, "where you get extreme satisfaction and joy in the work you've done, satisfaction in seeing so many people enjoy the fruits of what you conceived."

Pesin and some of the people who helped make the dream of Liberty State Park a reality took a boat trip out to the statue from the park yesterday, placing a wreath there marked with the words "1958-1983, With Love From the People of Jersey City."

Pesin also gave David Moffit, superintendent of the Liberty Island and Ellis Island national monuments, a beach towel with a picture of Uncle Sam dancing with the Statue of Liberty.

It was a time for remembering.

Pesin recalled how the trip to

Liberty Island was sparked by his outrage at the length of time it took him, his wife Ethel and their children, Judy, then 7, and Samuel, then 9, to visit the statue by way of the ferry from Battery Park, Manhattan.

He went to The Jersey Journal to express his complaints, and Eugene Farrell, then editor of the paper, asked if he would be willing to dramatize it.

Pesin recalled that Farrell suggested the boat trip and it was only on the day of the trip that Pesin found out the boat would be a canoe.

He called his wife and asked whether she thought he should make the trip.

"I said," Mrs. Pesin recalled yesterday, "did you pay your insurance?"

"He said, 'It's paid up.'"

"So I said, 'Go!'"

Mrs. Pesin, described by her husband as very supportive of his efforts to get the park built, said she always knew "that when

Morris gets an idea and he starts something, he finishes it."

Pesin, a former city councilman, is director of the City Spirit program, which ran an art festival at the park this past Sunday attended by an estimate 15,000 persons.

He is also a member of the Liberty State Park Public Advisory Commission and member of the national Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission. He attended a major fundraiser of that commission at Liberty Island last night.

Pesin stressed that the drive for Liberty State Park was grass-roots movement, which the city helped by donating property that represented potentially valuable real estate.

"This was Jersey City brainchild," he said. "It did not come from the planning desks of planners in Trenton."

Press attention over the years was very important in getting the park built, he said.



Photo by Wally H

## Flowers for a lady

His arm outstretched in a moment of celebration, Morris Pesin places a wreath at the base of the Statue of Liberty. (See Page 3.)