

BY: Senator STEWART-COUSINS

MOURNING the death of Si Spiegel, dedicated father and grandfather, meritorious veteran, and distinguished member of his community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Si Spiegel was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Si Spiegel, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel died on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at the age of 99; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel was born in Manhattan, New York on May 28, 1924, to Massia (Perlman) and David Spiegel; and

WHEREAS, The son of Jewish immigrants who came to the United States from Eastern Europe, Si Spiegel was raised in a religious neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel graduated from the Straubenmuller Textile High School in Manhattan, New York in May 1942 and enlisted in the United States Army four months later; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from aircraft mechanics school at Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, Si Spiegel underwent additional training at Mitchel Field to become an aviation cadet; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel was deployed to Eye, England as a B-17 pilot within the 849th Bomb Squadron of the 490th Bomb Group during World War II; and

WHEREAS, During his 33rd mission, an air raid on Berlin on February 3, 1945, Si Spiegel's aircraft was shot down, forcing him to land in Soviet-occupied Poland; after being held by Russian troops for weeks, he and his fellow officers used parts of their aircraft to fix another B-17 and flew to an American base in Foggia, Italy; and

WHEREAS, After returning to New York on August 31, 1945, Si Spiegel joined folk singer Pete Seeger's Good Neighbor Chorus; and

WHEREAS, While attending the Camp Unity summer camp in Wingdale, New York in 1949, Si Spiegel met Motoko Ikeda, the daughter of Japanese immigrants who was incarcerated in an internment camp in Wyoming during World War II; he and Motoko married in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel faced discrimination due to his Jewish heritage, which prevented him from becoming a commercial pilot; he also found difficulty keeping a machinist job due to his affiliation with the United Electrical Workers Union, which was branded a communist organization by the Congress of Industrial Organizations during the height of the Red Scare; he would later become president of Local 1709 of the Machinists Union, A.F.L.-C.I.O.; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel began working for the American Brush Machinery Corporation, based in Mount Vernon, NY, in 1954, where he operated machines that manufactured industrial brushes from wire and other materials; and

WHEREAS, After American Brush failed to enter the artificial Christmas tree business, Si Spiegel developed and patented new production techniques that helped emulate real conifer trees, leading to success for American Brush, which would later change its name to the American Tree and Wreath Company; and

WHEREAS, In 1981, Si Spiegel founded the Hudson Valley Tree Company; by the end of the decade, he employed 800 workers across his offices in Newburgh, New York and Evansville, Indiana; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel sold the Hudson Valley Tree Company in 1993; in his retirement, he focused on philanthropy related to culture, education, and social justice; and

WHEREAS, As both an employee and a business owner based out of the Hudson Valley, Si Spiegel spent several decades of his life living in Pleasantville, New York, where his philanthropy work had a tremendous impact on his community; he spent his final years living in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York, after moving there in the late 2010s; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel is survived by his three children, Sura Kazuko Ono, Ray Spiegel, and Tamio Spiegel; his brother, Lee Spiegel; and his five granddaughters; he is predeceased by his wife, Ms. Spiegel, who became an artist and passed away in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Si Spiegel will be remembered by those who knew him as a loving family member, a respected veteran, and an active member of his community focused on improving others' lives; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Si Spiegel and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Si Spiegel.