The Carters and Us

When I was a child, my parents gave me a stickers book about the presidents – Even at that tender age, I became fascinated with our presidents and thus began and even to this day, my hobby about our Commanders in Chief

Since then, I have studied our Presidents both professional and personal tidbits about them

Throughout my life, I have been lucky to meet my favorite heroes from all walks of life: sports, the arts, and politics

My wife Eve and I love to travel and over the course of time: we have lived in many states including Georgia – So back in the Summer of 1993, we journeyed from our home in Savannah to Plains – The first stop was the famous Plains Train Depot which is now a museum to the Carters as it was the site where President Carter declared his candidacy for both the Governorship and the Presidency

It was a lovely early Sunday morning, June 6, and not surprisingly we were the only ones inside that station attending and reading every exhibit, photograph, and presentation – I then approached the National Park Ranger and began engaging in conversation when Eve, who was in the foyer of the building started calling out to me – I remember the ranger, when he saw where Eve was, said to me 'Sir, I think you better listen to your wife'

At this point, Eve said 'Would you not only like to personally meet the Carters and even more so: have our photo taken with them?" - The ranger then said if you head out to their church, the president is giving one of his Bible classes, and then they will come out and have photos taken with you – The Secret Service will guide you through all of this'

In a flash, we then headed over to the Marantha Baptist Church where regrettably we were too late for President Carter's Bible Class – As we alighted from our car, we were warmly greeted by the Secret Service who escorted us to the bastions at the head of the line – They then informed us that in just a short spell, we will be able to meet the former President and First Lady

A couple of minutes later, the church doors opened and out poured the church members and quite casually: there were the Carters – As soon as they were ready for the photo sessions, the Secret Service escorted us to them – The President then said to us 'Ma'am if you would please stand next to me and sir,

if you would please stand next to Mrs. Carter, we will be happy to have photos taken"

What I found incredible was just the week before, we were in Disney World and waited an hour for one of the silliest of attractions and here, we now waited all of two minutes to meet one of the most powerful couples in the world – It should also be pointed out that had we waited to the following week to tour Plains, Georgia, we would not have been able to meet the Carters as President Clinton had sent President Carter to the bargaining table between South and North Korea to avert a World War III which he did

I was so in awe of this astounding encounter that I was, shockingly for those who know me: speechless – Thank goodness for my wife who is quite graciously glib and eloquent to thank the Carters for this rare opportunity – All I could muster to say as we shook hands was 'Thank you Mr president and Mrs. Carter – This has been one of the greatest honors in my life' – Both the President and Mrs. Carter smiled and expressed their gratitude to us which as historians and scholars have pointed out and complement their assessment of them: how indelibly modest and genuine this amazing couple have been – And, yes, we treasure that moment and the photograph!

From 1978 – 1981, I worked for the New Jersey Region of Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael) – I can remember being in the National JNF Office in NYC when the Camp David Peace Accord was signed – It was President Carter who was the host and catalyst to this phenomenal treaty and whatever one's assessment or personal feelings toward President Carter, he was indeed a man intent on securing peace – It can be said that till this very day, peace at the very least has existed between Israel and Egypt

When we lived in Georgia, we often toured Atlanta and the Carter Center – There is a wing addressing the personal and professional fight that the President and Mrs. Carter attempted to combat against hatred namely anti-Semitism and Racism – The speeches, bills and resolutions and drives were made in the sacred name of humankind and never for personal gain

One of my favored personal items is a copy of Jimmy Carter's Turning Point – Aside from the content of this exceptional book is the gift of his personal signing – I treasure this copy beyond words

- May the Carters truly rest in peace with a nation's eternal gratitude